MARVEL

S.H.I.E.L.D.

BY HICKMAN & WEAVER
WITH STRAIN & OBACK

S.H.I.E.L.D.
the Engineers of Change...
the Greater Science... the Quiet Math...
the Silent Truth... the Hidden Art...
the Secret Alchemy

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SR. MANAGER, DIGITAL: **TIM SMITH 3**
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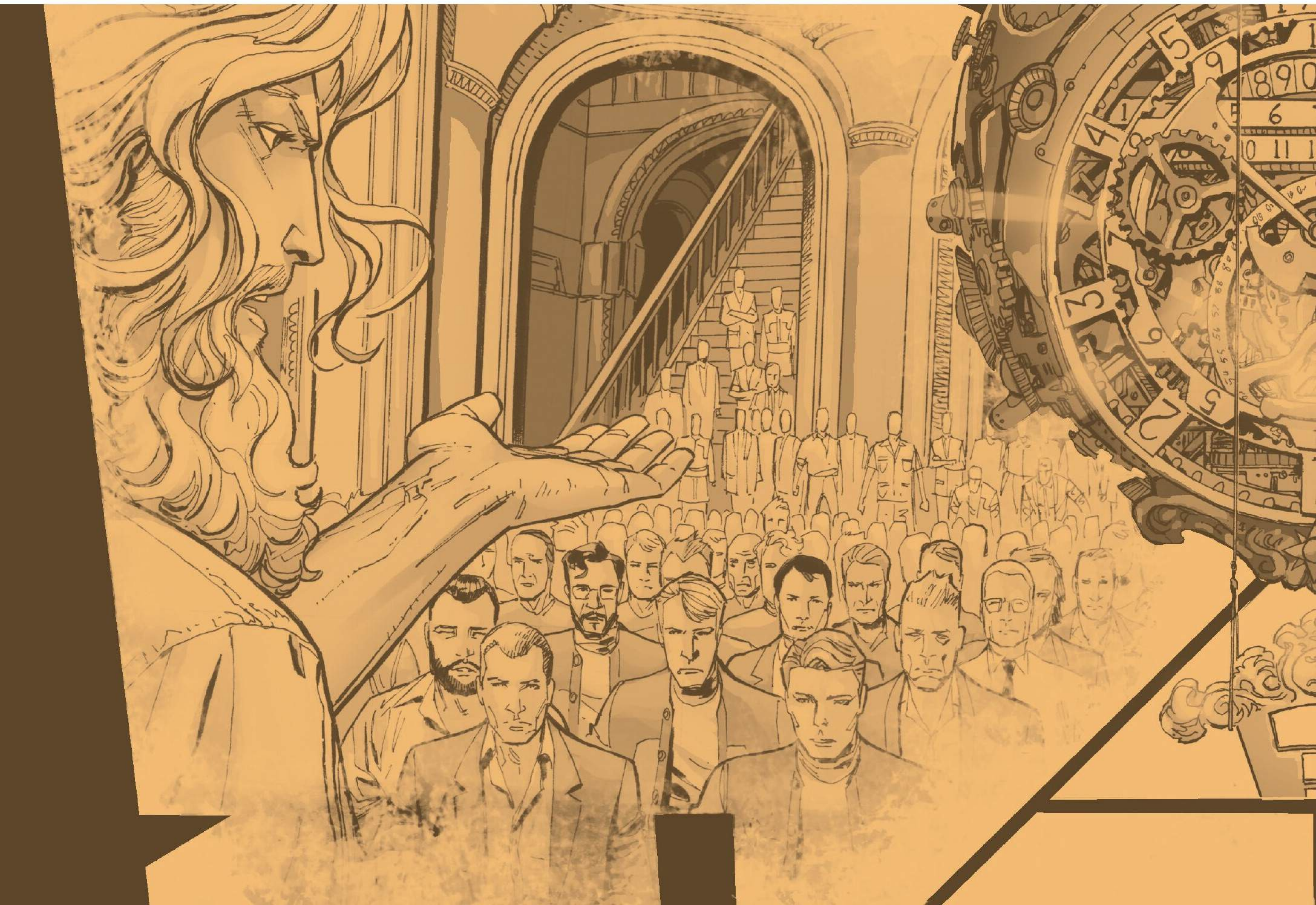

S.H.I.E.L.D.

Source of Power...

The Engineers of Change...

♂ The Greater Science... the Quiet Math...

☿ The Silent Truth... the Hidden Arts...

⊕ ...the Secret Alchemy

♂ You Stand in the Circle of Light where Becoming is natural...

♃ ...for those ripe for something...

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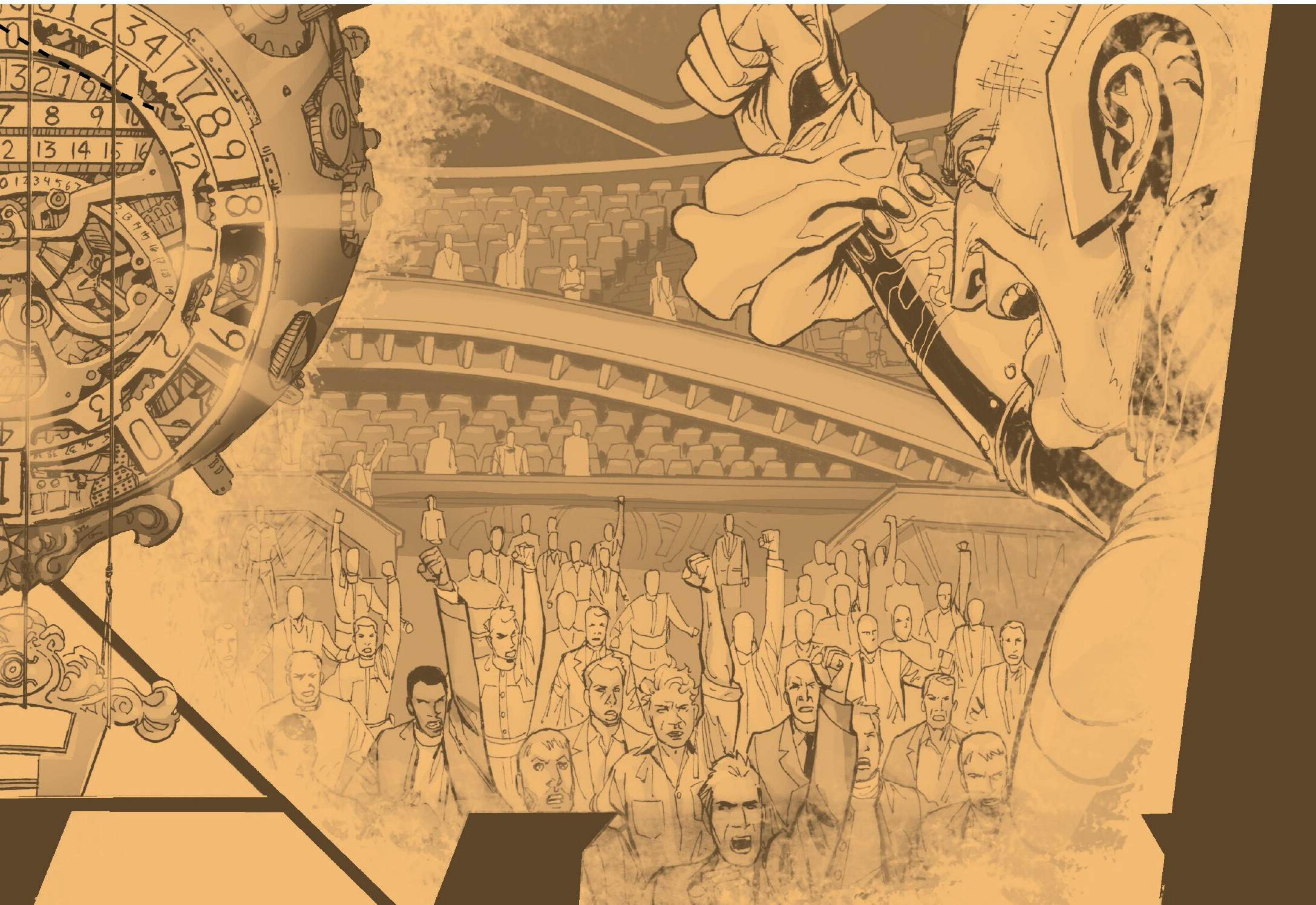


Chapter One

*“The **Unholy Resurrection** of **Leonardo da Vinci**”*

New York.
1953.
SCHOOL BUS
My father always said they would come for me.

GET IN THE CAR, LEONID.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE, SON...
...WE KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY ARE.
TARDI'S K
ANT BROS. BAKER
APPLIANCES

I was taken to Rome.
WHERE DOES THIS LEAD?

TO THE *ETERNAL PLACE.*
TO YOUR *FUTURE.*
LOOK NOW, LEONID...
LOOK, AND SEE WONDER.
URBIS IMMORTALIS.
THE IMMORTAL CITY.

I KNOW THAT ROME IS BUILT ATOP AN OLDER ROME AND AN EVEN MORE ANCIENT LAYER LIES BENEATH THAT...
BUT A PERFECTLY PRESERVED SUBTERRANEAN CITY A QUARTER MILE DOWN...HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
SCIENCE. MAGIC. HOW DO YOU DEFINE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER?
IT IS THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE WORLD.
THIS IS THE HOME OF *THE UNDYING ONES*...*THE IMMORTALS*...
"...THE *HIGH COUNCIL* OF THE *SHIELD.*"
LISTEN CLOSELY.
CERTAIN THOUGHTS *RESONATE.* THEY ECHO THROUGH TIME.
Everything begins with an IDEA.
S.H.I.E.L.D.
Everything begins with an idea
EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH AN *IMAGE.*
THERE WAS A FIRE IN THE SKY...

2620 BC.
"IT WAS THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION.
BA-BA-BOOM!
"HE WAS THE PHARAOH KHASEKHEMWY KHASEKHEMUI. SON OF HORUS. SON OF SET. THE GREATEST OF HIS GENERATION AND RULER OF THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS.
"AND WITH HIM, THE SECOND GREAT DYNASTY DIED.
"IT WAS VIOLENCE AND HORROR...

"...AND THE VERY END OF DAYS.
"ONE MAN STOOD IN THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT WAS AND WHAT MIGHT BE."
‹THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS!›
"HE KILLED THE QUEEN-- DESTROYING THE HOST-- AND SAVING US ALL.
"ONE MAN, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXTINCTION AND SURVIVAL.
"HE WAS **IMHOTEP**-- THE FIRST OF US--AND WE HONOR HIM WITH OUR **ACTIONS**...

"WE HONOR HIM WITH OUR *NAME*."

"FROM THAT GENERATION...
"...TO THE NEXT...
"...AND TO THIS VERY DAY.
"WE ARE A ***SHIELD*** PROTECTING HUMANITY FROM THE KNOWN AND UNKNOWN."
A SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE THINGS THAT WOULD STOP US FROM BECOMING WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE...

IT IS A ***HIGHER CALLING***--AS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THIS WORLD TO PROTECT BY GOD IN HEAVEN HIMSELF.
AND WHO ARE WE IF WE DO NOT MAKE IT INTO SOMETHING BETTER?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH OF THIS?
I DO.
WITHOUT A PURPOSE, A MAN IS NOTHING.
YES.
BUT WE WONDER...DO YOU SHARE OUR GIFT? DO YOU HAVE THE NECESSARY VISION?
DO YOU KNOW THE ***FINAL FATE*** OF MAN?
HOW COULD ANYONE KNOW THINGS LIKE THAT?

THE GREATER SCIENCE.
THE QUIET MATH.
THE SILENT TRUTH.
THE HIDDEN ARTS.
THE SECRET ALCHEMY.
EVERY QUESTION HAS AN ANSWER.
EVERY EQUATION HAS A SOLUTION.
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
YOU WILL STAND IN THE GAP, LEONID...

"...FOR THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED."
Luoyang, Han Dynasty. 114 AD. The palace of Zhang Heng.
<IF I FAIL, YOU MUST USE THE SPEAR AND ATTEMPT TO SLAY THIS THING.>
<MASTER...I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT HAS SPECIAL POWERS--I'VE EXAMINED IT CLOSELY AND IT IS JUST WOOD AND METAL. OH, THAT WE HAD IMHOTEP'S GREATER ARTIFACT AND NOT THIS ONE.>
<THINGS ARE AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN. THE SHIELD RESIDES IN THE WEST, THE SPEAR IN THE EAST...AND IT IS BELIEF IN THE IDEA THAT GIVES THE THING ITS POWER.>
<YES, MASTER...DO YOU THINK WHAT YOU ATTEMPT WILL WORK?>
<YES. IT HAS TO...>
<...THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS.>

‹AH, THE ENDLESS MAJESTY OF A CELESTIAL WOMAN! YOU SHINE WITH EXPECTATION, THE SUN DEFEATING THE NIGHT. YOU ARE UNIQUE AMONG ALL GODS AND MEN. TAKE OUR DAY, USE OUR LIGHT-- A GIFT AND NOT A BURDEN.›
BEHIND EVERYTHING WE DO, THERE IS A *PURPOSE*-- A *STRUCTURE*--FOR ACHIEVING WHAT IS NECESSARY...
WE ARE THE *ENGINEERS* OF *CHANGE*.

Florence. 1495.
IT IS READY.
I TELL YOU, PIETRO, THERE IS SOMETHING UNNATURAL HERE...
...AND THE EVIDENCE IS IN THE AIR.
IT GROWS COLDER.

MAYBE IT DOES. BUT WHAT OF IT? THE SUN RISES, LORENZO. THE SUN SETS.
A CONSTANT STATE WOULD BE... UNNATURAL.
NO, THIS IS SOMETHING MORE...
SEE, A SHAPE LIES WITHIN.

MASTER, I SAY THIS IS AN ILL OMEN. PIETRO DISAGREES.
LOOK-- PERHAPS YOU CAN DECIDE THE TRUTH OF IT.
HMMM...
YOU ARE *RIGHT.* THERE *IS* SOMETHING *WRONG...* AND WE MUST ACT ACCORDINGLY.
MASTER, IT IS THE *SUN,* AND WE ARE MEN WITH FEET FIRMLY ON THE GROUND.
IF YOU SAY WE MUST, THEN WE *MUST...* BUT TELL ME *HOW?*
WE ARE THE SHIELD...
...WHO *BUT US* COULD DO SUCH A THING?
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, MASTER?
WHAT IT IS THAT LEONARDO DA VINCI DOES BEST...
BUILD SOMETHING.

AND OVER TIME, WE HAVE BUILT MANY MACHINES.
Florence. 1503.
IT IS COMPLETE.
GOOD. THIS HAPPENS SLOWLY...
BUT WHATEVER IS IN THERE GROWS.
AS IT GROWS, THE SUN BECOMES WEAKER.
THEN LET US NOT WASTE ANY MORE TIME.
HELP ME INTO THIS.

CLICK
SHUMP
GOOD.
EXCELLENT.
WHAT DOES IT DO?
I THINK THAT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, LORENZO... IT MOVES ME FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER.
AND THE OTHER DEVICE?
THIS?
THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY...
SOMETHING ***UNIQUE***... SOMETHING ***SPECIAL***...
SOMETHING THAT WILL ENABLE ME TO SAVE US ***ALL.***
FITTING...AS THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS.

AND ON THE BACK OF OUR INVENTION, WE HAVE FASHIONED A SUPPORT FOR THE UPHOLDING OF SOCIETY...
...FOR THE ***GREAT MACHINE*** OF ***PROGRESS...***

"...FOR THE EVOLUTION AND *SURVIVAL* OF MAN."
Rome. 1582 AD. The workshop of Galileo.
WE ARE JUST IN TIME...
MASTER GALILEO, HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR MACHINE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP IT?
BECAUSE IT MUST...
...BECAUSE IT ***WILL.***

HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED THAT OUT BY NOW...? THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS.
"AND THAT IS THE SECRET TRUTH OF THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE WORLD.
"THE *FINAL* KNOWLEDGE...
"...THE *END* OF ALL THINGS."

UNTIL THAT DAY, WE PUSH HUMANITY AND PROTECT IT.
WE ARE SECURITY...WE ARE SHELTER.
WE ARE THE *SHIELD.*
EARLIER YOU ASKED ME: WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?
DO YOU STILL WISH TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION?
I DO.
IT'S SIMPLE, MY CHILD...
...YOU MUST *JOIN* US.

Three years later.
Rome. The Immortal City.
He used to come with the setting of the sun.
The dark man.

The NIGHT MACHINE.
My father.
HELLO, SON.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!?
IT'S BEEN OVER THREE YEARS AND I HAVEN'T HEARD A SINGLE...
I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED...
I THOUGHT SOMETHING HAPPENED.
WITH GOOD REASON.
I DIED...
I'VE BEEN BEYOND THE VEIL-- CROSSED THE ABYSS-- AND BACK AGAIN.
BACK TO FIND YOU HERE.

I DIDN'T HAVE ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO...
...I'VE MADE A HOME HERE.
AND?
HAVE YOU COME TO TAKE ME AWAY?
OH NO, SON...
...I'VE COME TO TEAR THIS PLACE TO THE GROUND.
ARRROOOGA! ARRROOOGA!
WELL, THEY'RE GETTING FASTER.
COME WITH ME...
...I'M SUPPOSED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

THIS?
DAD, THIS IS *ITER:* THE DOOR THAT CAN'T BE OPENED.
IT'S BEEN LOCKED FOR CENTURIES...THE KEY WAS...
...LOST FOREVER...
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THE STAIRS.
WHAT'S UP THERE?
A higher calling.
EVERY MAN HAS A PURPOSE, LEONID. EVERY MAN HAS A FATE...
...AND IT CANNOT BE DICTATED TO YOU BY OTHERS.
NOW, *GO!*
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.
STOP!
MOVE AWAY FROM THE GATEWAY!

HUFF HUFF
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD?
AGENT RICHARDS.
AGENT STARK.
IT DIDN'T TAKE...
CARE TO TRY AGAIN?

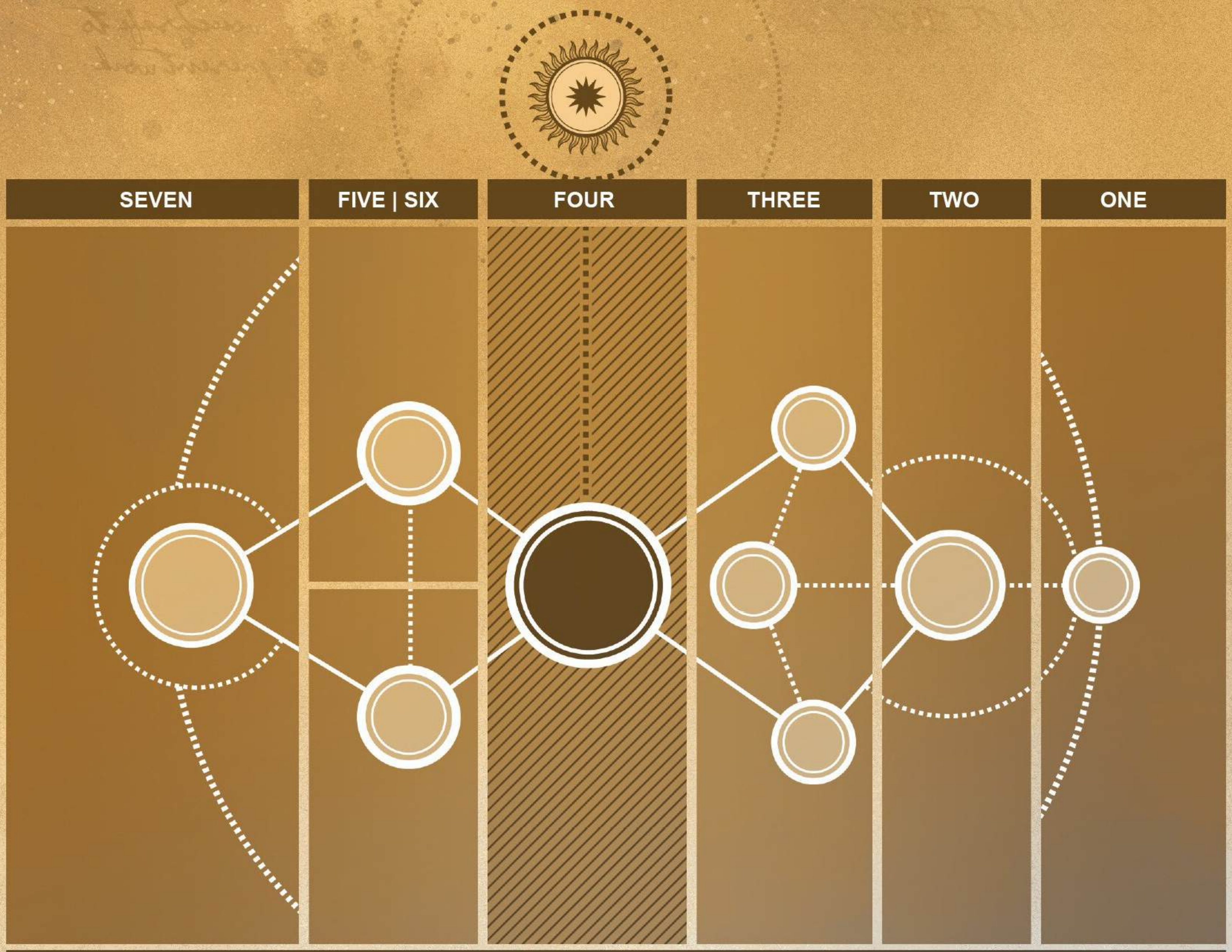
BOOOM!
As long as I have known him, the Night Machine--my father--has always evoked a strong reaction within me.
He stirs something.
New ideas in the dead of night when dreaming is natural...

And tomorrow is nothing but the promise of possibility.
His return signals something...
A necessary change. A renaissance.
I must become *something more*.
FWASH!
RING THE BELL, BOY.
WAKE THE WATCH.

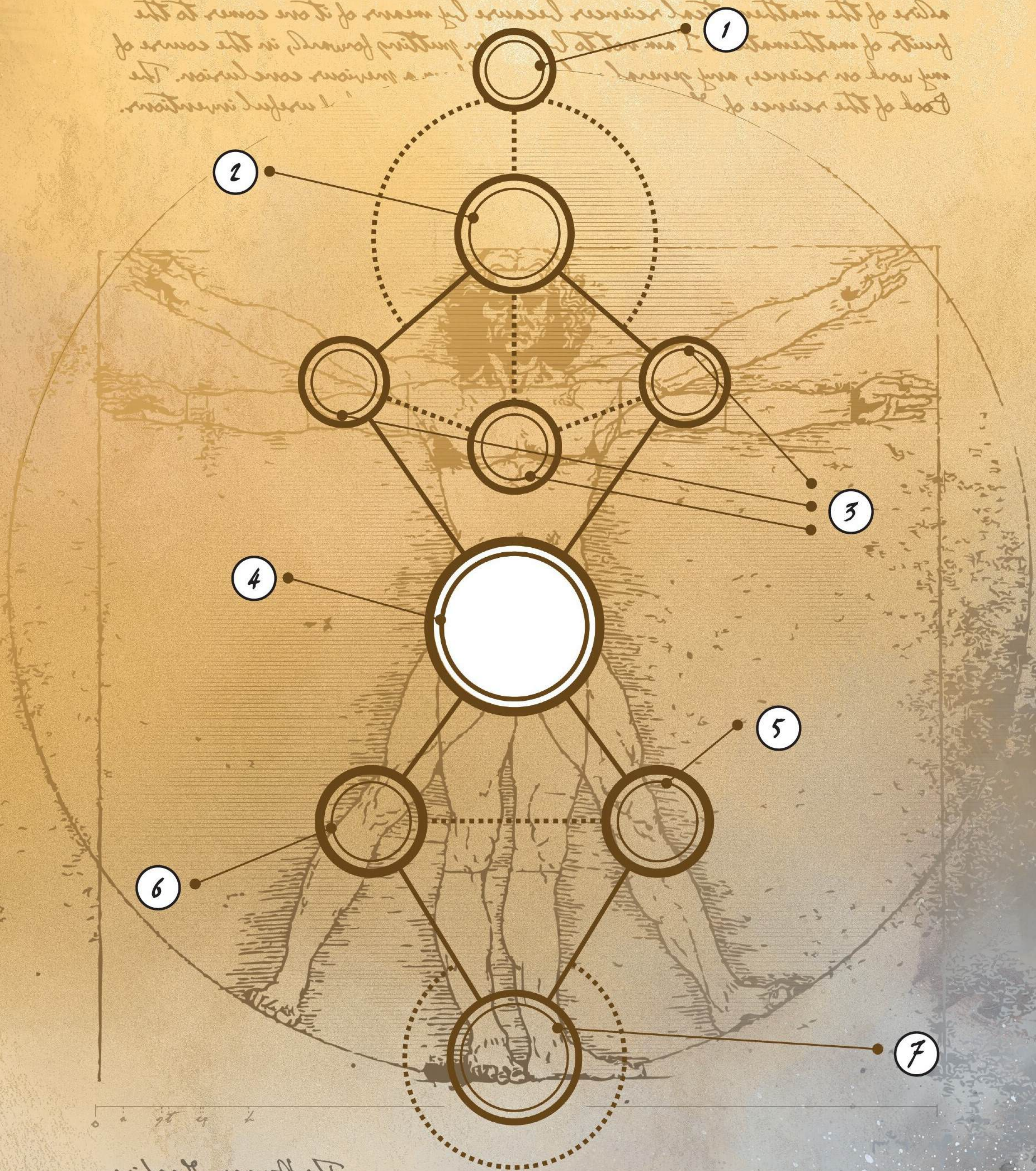
I AM LEONARDO DA VINCI...
...AND IN MY HANDS I HOLD **HOPE** AND THE RESCUING OF ALL THINGS.

*the*HUMAN**MACHINE**

Section ONE:	The Anchor.	*The Sacrifice. The Man left behind. The Builder.*
Section TWO:	The Engine.	*The Drive. Total Illumination. The Agent of Destiny.*
Section THREE:	The Navigator.	*What is, what has come before, and what we will be. The Last Caliphate.*
Section FOUR:	The Source.	*The Water in the Well. The Generator. Hope.*
Section FIVE:	The Mechanism.	*The Short End of All Possibility. Practical Application. The Work.*
Section SIX:	The Conduit.	*The Change Medium. The Measurement of Progress.*
Section SEVEN:	The Path.	*The Death of Chaos. The Single Portion. Tomorrow.*



Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind. So we must stretch ourselves to the very limits of human possibility. *Anything less is a sin against both God and man.*



Chapter Two

“Newton’s Theory of *Eternal Life”*

S.H.I.E.L.D.
Everything begins with an IDEA.
S.H.I.E.L.D.
Everything begins with an idea.
A global projection of ide
A global projection of ideology.
An outgrowth of homogenous liberal democracy. The equality of all men.
An outcropping of singular will with a communal outcome.
Resulting in a fountain of forced serenity from which all men can find nourishment.
DRINK.

DRINK DEEPLY...
...AND LIVE FOREVER.
NOW, NOSTRADAMUS...
...GIVE ME A WORD.
THE SOUNDS OF WAR ECHO IN THE SKY: SOON THE SON OF ETERNITY RETURNS: SOON THE CHILD OF THE STARS IS BORN: FATE OR FREE WILL, THE MECHANISM REVEALS.
BA-BOOM!
CHANGE IS NOT *COMING...*
...IT IS HERE. ***NOW.***

Five minutes ago.
It is night, and still I dream.
I'M REALLY SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE YOU'RE DA VINCI?
...
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
AND YET--
--I REMAIN LEONARDO DA VINCI... AND YOU ARE THE BOY, LEONID.
THE ETERNAL DYNAMO--THE SOURCE OF THE MACHINE.
HOW DO YOU KNOW...
THIS IS ALL SO STRANGE.
AND WILL SPIRAL EVEN STRANGER. TELL ME, WHAT CAN YOU REMEMBER FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?
EXCUSE ME?
TELL ME YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES.
YOU CAN'T JUST APPEAR OUT OF THIN AIR AND ASK ME ABOUT...
UHHHH...
THE CITY.
NEW YORK AND MY FATHER...
GO DEEPER.

I remember darkness and then light.
I remember monsters.
A temple.
And a book with no words.

I remember a man took me.
One that shone like the sun.
There was a machine...
And then finally my father.

OH.
HOW DID YOU...?
IT WAS ALWAYS THERE. LOCKED AWAY.
THIS IS WHAT I DO, LEONID. I SEE THE STRUCTURE OF THINGS AND HOW BEST TO MAKE THEM WORK.
I AM AN ARCHITECT OF EVERYTHING.
AH, THERE IT IS.
CLICK!
WAIT...HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT WAS THERE? HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE?
HOW DID YOU EVEN GET HERE?
I FLEW.
HOW DID YOU?
I CAME THROUGH A DOOR.
WHICH CLEARLY WASN'T JUST A DOOR, BUT SOME TYPE OF BRIDGE...
I'VE ALWAYS DESCRIBED IT AS A HOLE, PUNCHED THROUGH BOTH SPACE AND TIME.
YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, TOO?
OF COURSE I DO, LEONID...I BUILT IT.

I BUILT *ALL* OF IT.

THIS WILL SUMMON ALL THE UNDYING ONES IN THE IMMORTAL CITY.
THERE WILL BE A *GATHERING.*
CH-CHUNK
BONG!
SOON ALL OF THE IMMORTALS WILL STAND BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL AND THE HOLY RELIC ITSELF.
WE WILL GO BACK THROUGH THE DOOR AND MEET THEM THERE...AS I HAVE *WORDS* FOR THEM.
BA-BOOM!
AS FORETOLD...AN EXPLOSION AFTER ARRIVAL.
OH, NO... DAD.
IT SEEMS YOUR FATHER HAMMERS THE SHIELD.

Five minutes ago.
I'VE GOT HIM.

ZZZZAAKK!
UUOOFFFF!
I DIED BECAUSE OF YOU...
IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT I RETURN THE FAVOR!

KRA-BOOOM!
HE'S GOTTEN MORE POWERFUL.
HE'S IMPROVED THE *MECHANISM,* NATHANIEL.
NO...I DON'T THINK IT'S THE *SUIT.*
YOU...THIS PLACE...IT'S ALL A PERVERSION!
COME OUT SO WE CAN END IT.

HOWARD, IS THAT...?
NO OTHER CHOICE.
MORE GUARDS ARE ARRIVING.
MAKE SURE THEY GET CLEAR...
I'VE GOT THE NIGHT MACHINE.
EVERYONE... ***GET DOWN!!!***

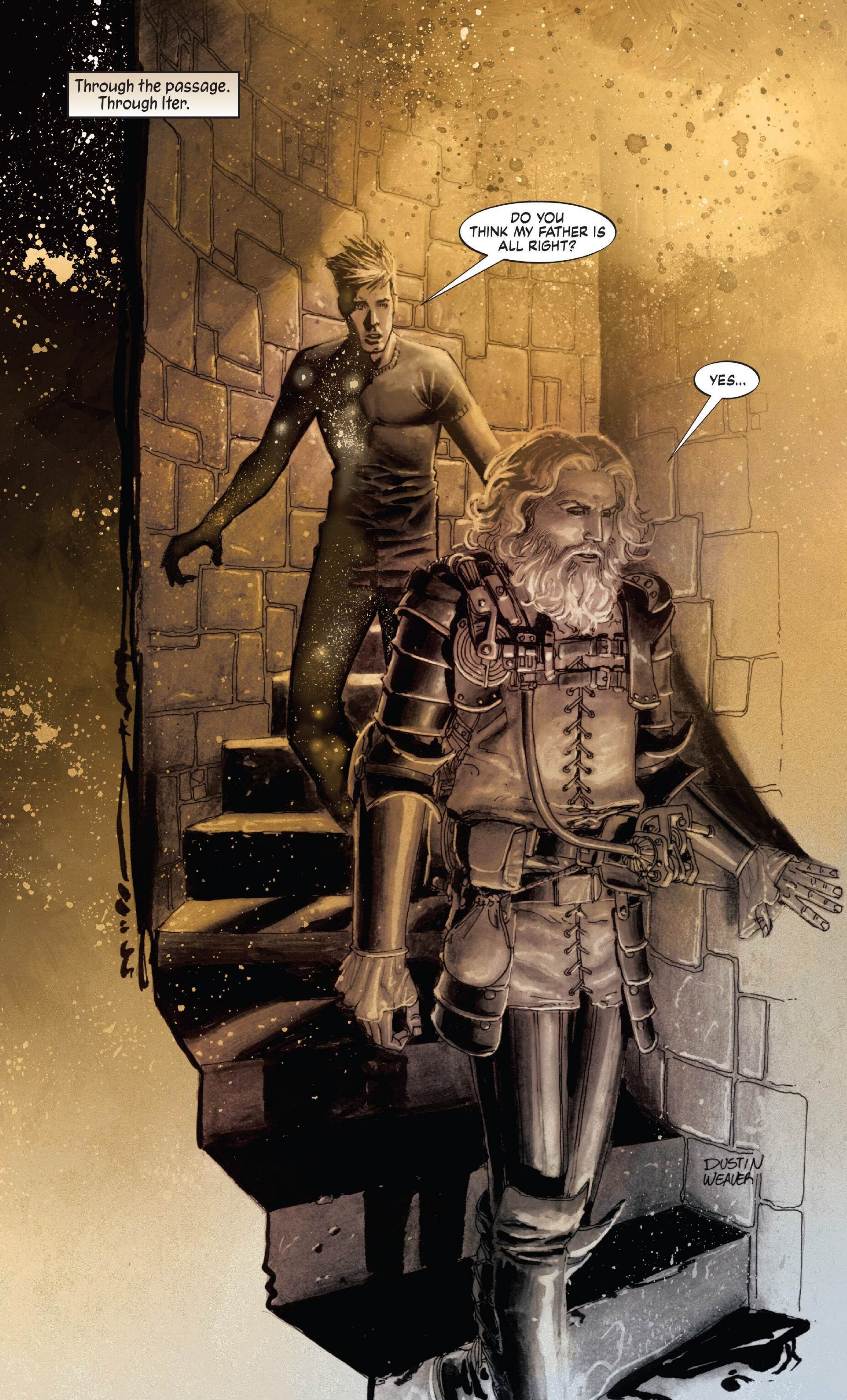
THUNK!
HmMmMmMm...
ZZZAKK!

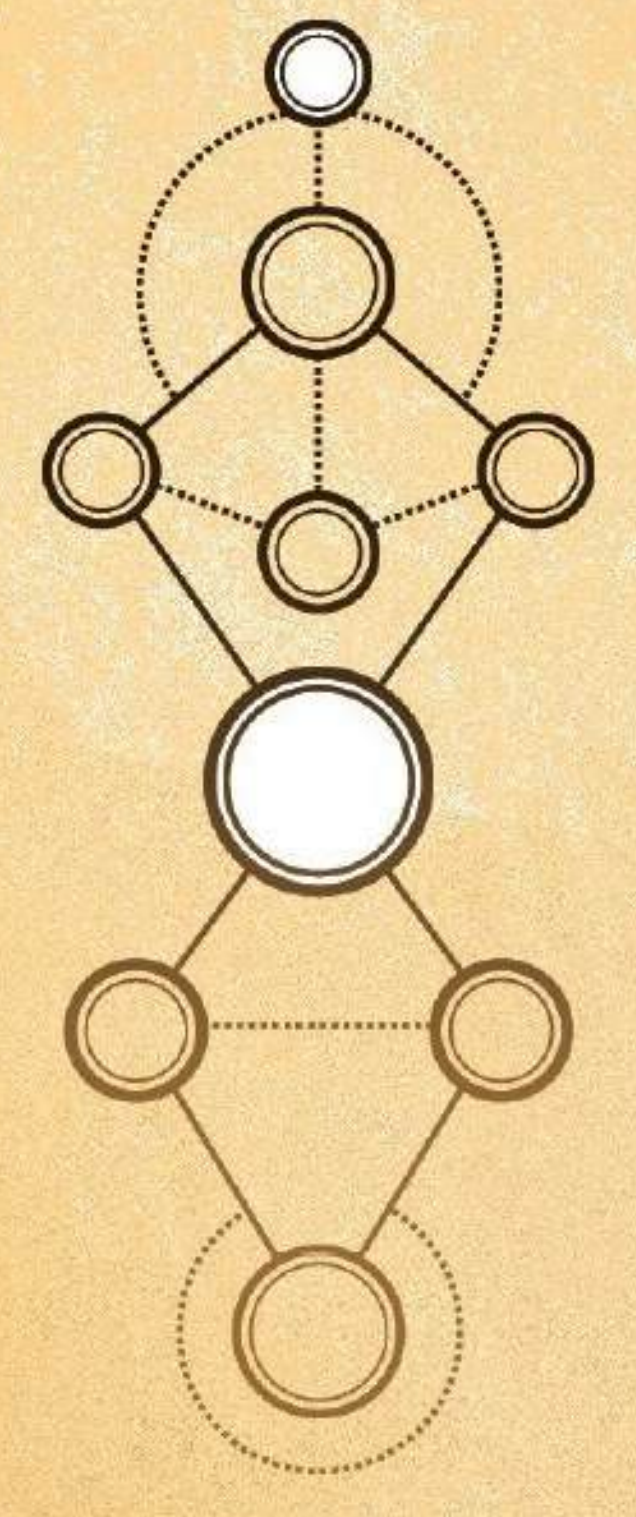
UHHHH.
WELL, THAT EXPLAINS THINGS.
HE'S BUILDING TOWARDS CRITICAL MASS.

YOU'VE KILLED US ALL...
I WIN.
I CAN STOP HIM.
I'LL DISPLACE THE CORE.
NATHANIEL!
STOP!

KA-BOOM!

Oh, no...


Through the passage.
Through Iter.
DO YOU THINK MY FATHER IS ALL RIGHT?
YES...
DUSTIN WEAVER



Leonardo da Vinci: ...But not in the sense that you mean.

He is gone -- he has been transported from this time and place to another and will not return to Rome until three years from now.

I will warn you now, Leonid... when he does, your father will be... different. Changed.

Leonid: What does that mean?

Leonardo da Vinci: All men are transformed over time. Experiences alter us. Some change us more than others...

Your father -- and the men who were with him -- will be shaped by fire. Forged into something more... useful.

Leonid: I don't... I don't understand how you know the things you do... I don't understand how you are even here.

Leonardo da Vinci: Oh, I possess no special powers of perception, as I have said, my gifts lie elsewhere.

I know the things I know -- who you are, what has happened to your father -- because they were told to me.

And I am here, because I was instructed to be here.

Leonid: By who?

Leonardo da Vinci: The man shining like the sun from your unlocked memories... He is the Forever Man. The Engine of the Machine.

Leonid: That phrase... you used something like it earlier. You described me as the Source of the Machine. What kind of device are you talking about?

Leonardo da Vinci: What kind? The kind that reshapes all of society. Forever. The greatest mechanism ever assembled: The Human Machine.

And you will be at the heart of it.

Leonid: That doesn't... that... please don't tell me anything else. I don't want to know these things.

Leonardo da Vinci: Why would you say something like that?

Leonid: It's too much. It's too much, too fast... you're scaring me.

Leonardo da Vinci: The acquisition of any knowledge is always of use to the intellect, Leonid. It drives out the useless while retaining the good. Nothing can be loved or hated unless it is first known.

You must understand the choices you will...

HRMMPH...IT SEEMS THE EXPLOSION REMOVED A LARGE PORTION OF THE DOME.
WE WILL HAVE TO GO THROUGH "THE WORLD"...
THIS DOESN'T LEAD TO THE COUNCIL.
THE DAMAGE TO THE CITY PREVENTS US FROM GETTING THERE BY THE NORMAL MEANS.
I'M SHOWING YOU ***ANOTHER WAY.***
OH.
WE NEVER STOP LEARNING, LEONID.
THE LESSONS ALWAYS CONTINUE...
YOU HAVE STUDIED HERE FOR YEARS NOW, YES?
I HAVE.
IN THE COMING DAYS YOU WILL STUDY ME AND CONTRAST THE TWO.
EVERYTHING THIS PLACE IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT IS ENABLING MAN TO THRIVE...
...SO WE CAN BECOME SOMETHING MORE.
ONCE, LONG AGO, I LED THIS GROUP.
THE GREAT MEN OF THIS PLACE BELIEVED IN THE FUTURE-- IN THE INFINITE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

NOW, I HAVE BEEN WARNED THAT THIS COUNCIL--THESE **NEW MEN** OF THE **SHIELD**--BELIEVE IN SOMETHING DIFFERENT: A LOGICAL CONCLUSION... INEVITABILITY...
AN END.
I HAVE COME TO SHATTER THIS NOTION...
I AM A BUILDER OF GREAT THINGS, LEONID...
AND ON THAT RUBBLE, RECONSTRUCT A BETTER WAY.

AND THESE MEN HAVE STOOD ON MY SHOULDERS FOR **FAR** TOO LONG.

Chapter Three

“The **Theory** of **Eternal Life**”

SINCE I WAS A YOUNG BOY, I HAVE HAD A DIVINE CALLING... THERE IS NO SHAME IN THE PATH IT HAS LED ME DOWN.
I SAY THESE THINGS BECAUSE THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT.
I WRITE THEM DOWN BECAUSE THEY MATTER.
This is a record of consequence.
nourishment.
This is a record of con
WHAM!
THERE ARE MEN AT THE GATE...
THEY CALL FOR YOU.

GET IN THE CARRIAGE, ISAAC.
I WAS TAKEN TO ROME.

I WAS TAKEN **HOME.**
YOU WERE CHOSEN.
YOU WERE CALLED.
WE ARE THE ***SHIELD.***
WE PROTECT HUMANITY FROM THE KNOWN AND UNKNOWN.
WE ARE A SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE THINGS THAT WOULD STOP US FROM BECOMING WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
I AM GALILEO GALILEI.
SOME MEN CALL ME ***MASTER***... YOU WILL CALL ME ***BROTHER.***

IN THE YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, MANY PEOPLE SAID MANY THINGS ABOUT GALILEO. THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THIS: HE UNDERSTOOD *COST.*
THAT THERE WAS A PRICE TO PAY FOR MOVING THE WORLD FORWARD... AND IT WAS ONE THAT HE WAS WILLING TO PAY.
WHAT I AM ABOUT TO SHARE WITH YOU IS THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ORGANIZATION...HOW IT IS WE ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE THINGS WE DO.
IT HINGES ON THE ***FIVE-FOLD UNDERSTANDING.***
OUR METHODOLOGY FOR MANAGING REALITY.
THIS IS *EDUCATION...*
...AND WE BEGIN WITH SOMETHING FAMILIAR TO MOST MEN.
THE GREATER SCIENCE.

Rome. 1582.
IT'S ALMOST FINISHED.
YES.
...AND I MUST SAY, FOR SOMEONE WHO REFUSES TO JOIN US, YOU SHOW AN UNCANNY INTEREST IN THE GOINGS-ON OF THE BROTHERHOOD.
I ALSO THOUGHT YOU LEFT.

I AM... ALWAYS HERE.
I HAVE CONSTRUCTED IT TO INCLUDE THE DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS WE AGREED UPON...BUT I HAVE CONCERNS.
YOU HAVE DOUBT.
SHOULDN'T I?
THIS HAS ALL BEEN TRIED BEFORE.
Baghdad. 750 A.D.
THE BLACK FLAG FLIES OVER THE FALLEN UMAYYAD CALIPHATE.
ABU MUSA JABIR IBN HAYYAN AL AZDI-- HEIR TO IMHOTEP'S LEGACY AND BROTHER OF THE SHIELD--HAS A WAKING DREAM.

WHAT IF THE WORLD COULD NEVER END?
WHAT IF A THOUSAND OF THE BROTHERHOOD SURRENDERED THE SUM TOTAL OF THEIR HOPES, DREAMS, INSPIRATION AND DESIRE TO A SINGLE MAN?
A CONDUIT FOR WHAT COULD BE...
THE **SECOND MAN.**
WHENEVER THERE WAS THE NEED, HE COULD CREATE A NEW EARTH.
A BETTER WORLD FOR THE VERY BEST OF MEN.
IF ONLY...
AND SO THEY FAILED.
THEY FAILED AND THE WORLD LOST 1,000 OF THE VERY MEN THAT WOULD HAVE SHAPED SOCIETY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME...
AND WITHOUT THE ***SHIELD,*** MAN TUMBLED INTO THE ***DARKEST*** OF ***AGES.***

SO TELL ME... HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT THAN WHAT WE ATTEMPT?
"YES, OF COURSE, THIS INTERMEDIARY DEVICE THAT I HAVE CONSTRUCTED WILL PROVIDE A CLEANER CONVERSION FROM POTENTIAL TO ACTUALITY...AND, YES, IT WILL, HOPEFULLY, MINIMIZE THE DRAIN TO A MORE ACCEPTABLE LEVEL...
"BUT ARE WE NOT STILL HUMAN AND THEREFORE INCAPABLE OF SUCH FEATS?"

THAT'S THE NECESSITY OF THE ENGINE...
THERE MUST BE A MECHANISM TO ALIGN SOUL, MIND AND BODY.
A MACHINE TO FOCUS MAN.
"WITH THAT, GALILEO, THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN'T BE DONE.
"THERE IS SIMPLY A PRICE TO BE PAID."

AND THE COST THAT DAY WAS TWO-THIRDS OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SHIELD.
THE RESULT OF THIS WAS MORE THAN SURVIVAL...
...IT WAS A RENAISSANCE. THE TRUE BEGINNING OF THE AGE OF REASON...
...THE BIRTH OF THE GREATER SCIENCE.

I WAS RECRUITED AFTER THIS, AND LATER LEARNED IT WAS WITH GREAT RESERVATION...
UP UNTIL THIS POINT IN THE BROTHERHOOD'S EXISTENCE, THERE WERE VERY STRICT RULES FOR THE MEN THEY ENLISTED.
SIMILAR WAYS OF THINKING. OLD RULES AND EVEN OLDER IDEOLOGY.
IN ME, THERE WAS SOMETHING NEW...SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
SOMETHING NORMALLY UNACCEPTABLE...
BUT GALILEO...HE WAS AN UNDERSTANDING TEACHER.
YOU WILL NOT FIND YOUR ANSWERS HERE.
"YOU MUST SEEK THEM OUT...
"...ELSEWHERE."

The Deviant City,
Ashomia. 1625.

I WAS CAPTURED BEFORE I COULD REACH THE CITY WALLS.
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM JUST A MAN SEEKING KNOWLEDGE.
I WOULD LEARN FROM YOU.
TO KNOW YOUR WAYS AND SERVE YOUR CAUSE.
HRMMM... ATATTAATC GGCCGGCGC TAATTA.
HIS SEQUENCING IS... UNIQUE--PAIR HIM WITH THE BEAST MORDA...
IF HE BINDS, THEN PERHAPS HE CAN LEARN.
I SUFFERED.

I SUFFERED THE INDIGNITY OF THEIR WAYS.
I SUFFERED THE CORRUPTION OF THEIR BELIEFS.
I SUFFERED SO THAT I COULD GAIN THEIR KNOWLEDGE...
THE HIDDEN ARTS.

KNOWLEDGE THAT, UNTIL THAT DAY, WAS CONCEALED FROM MAN.
NOT SCIENCE, BUT SOMETHING SIDEWAYS...SOMETHING BENT... REFRACTED. SOMETHING ALIEN AND DEVOUT.
THEIR HOLY BOOK.
DEVIANT SCRIPTURE THAT HAD BEEN PROTECTED OVER MILLENNIA.
NEVER TO BE COPIED. NEVER TO BE SHARED.
AND NOW THAT KNOWLEDGE BELONGED TO THE BROTHERHOOD.
FOR IT BELONGED TO ME.
THE HIDDEN ARTS WERE THE SECOND PART OF THE FIVE-FOLD UNDERSTANDING.
AND THE THIRD...THE THIRD YOU KNOW SO VERY WELL...

France.
1652.
MASTER... THE MEN YOU WARNED ME ABOUT HAVE RETURNED.
ALL OF YOU... ESCAPE THROUGH THE HIDDEN PASSAGE.
LEAVE, AND PROMISE NEVER TO RETURN.
HOW MAY I HELP YOU, SORCERER?
I FOUND IT. UNBELIEVABLE, WHERE IT WAS HIDDEN...BUT I FOUND IT.
SO NOW YOU AND I HAVE TIME...ALL OF TIME FOR TWILIGHT WORDS AND DIVINATIONS IN THE DARK OF NIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WHAT IS NOW A PROPHET, MAN ONCE CALLED A SEER...
I AM NEITHER.
THEN WHAT ARE YOU, NOSTRADAMUS?
CURSED... FOR I KNOW WHY IT IS YOU ARE HERE.
CHAIN HIM.

I HAD DISCOVERED THE THIRD UNDERSTANDING... *THE SECRET ALCHEMY.*
IT WAS HERE...IN THE WELL OF THE WORLD.
HERE... WHERE THE ***ELIXIR*** OF ***LIFE*** FLOWS.
WITH IMMORTALITY CAME CLARITY OF THOUGHT.
WITH CLARITY CAME UNDERSTANDING...AND THE DIVINE STRUCTURE FOR ULTIMATE DEDUCTION.
THE QUIET MATH.
= 2060
AND FOLLOWING QUICKLY BEHIND THAT, THE FIFTH AND FINAL UNDERSTANDING...

THE SILENT TRUTH.
AND IT CHANGED EVERYTHING... FOREVER.
FOREVER AND UNTIL THE VERY END OF TIME.
IT VALIDATED ALL THAT I HAD BELIEVED...EVERYTHING THAT HAD MADE ME DIFFERENT.
I KNEW THERE WAS NO LONGER A PLACE FOR THE OLD RULES...
"THAT THERE WAS... NO FUTURE FOR THE OLD WAY.
"ALL CHANGE HAS A COST.
"A PRICE THAT MUST BE PAID."
AS YOU VERY WELL KNOW... FOR YOU HAVE BEEN PAYING IT ALMOST 500 YEARS NOW, NOSTRADAMUS.
SHALL WE CONTINUE, OR WILL YOU FINALLY GIVE ME WHAT I NEED?
I WILL...

VERY WELL.
DRINK.
DRINK DEEPLY...
...AND LIVE FOREVER.
NOW, NOSTRADAMUS... GIVE ME A WORD.
THE SOUNDS OF WAR ECHO IN THE SKY:
SOON THE SON OF ETERNITY RETURNS:
SOON THE CHILD OF THE STARS IS BORN:
FATE OR FREE WILL, THE MECHANISM REVEALS.
BA-BOOM!

CHANGE IS NOT COMING...
IT IS *HERE*.
FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE **SHIELD** HAD A RALLYING CRY:
"THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS."
IT WAS POSTURING... DEFIANCE. A THING OF HOPE AND PROMISE.
A STATEMENT ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF MAN.
I ALONE KNOW BETTER... BECAUSE I KNOW EXACTLY WHEN THE WORLD WILL END.
FOR I POSSESS THE ***SILENT TRUTH***.
I AM ***ISAAC NEWTON***.

SOME MEN CALL ME BROTHER...
...YOU WILL CALL ME MASTER.

Secret Vatican Archives

An abbreviated record of the correspondence between His Holiness, Pope Gregory XIII, and Patriarch of the SHIELD, Galileo Galilei, in the aftermath of the destruction of Rome by [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] in 1582 AD.

First a missive from Galileo in response to a query from His Holiness:

> Your Holiness, regarding your inquiry relating to the events of recent days, it would be rather unmanageable, and quite burdensome, to fully explain the process by which we successfully drove off [**XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**], but, to summarize, we created a new Earth and made [**XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**] consume it.
>
> We regret any destruction of property and, more importantly, loss of life, but feel that both necessity and urgency demanded our chosen course of action. Our Brotherhood awaits your instruction on how best to manage this unwieldy situation.
>
> Galileo Galilei

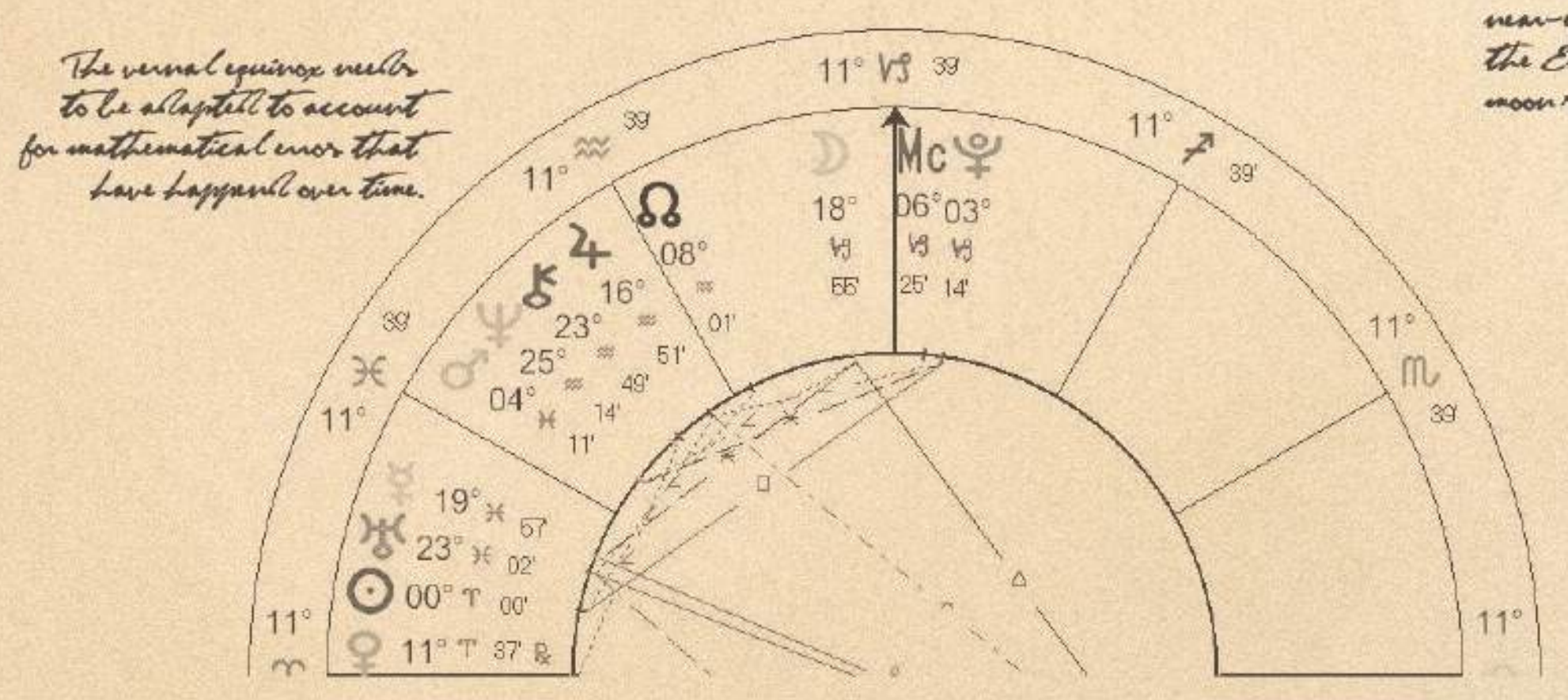
The resulting rapid reply from His Holiness, Pope Gregory XIII:

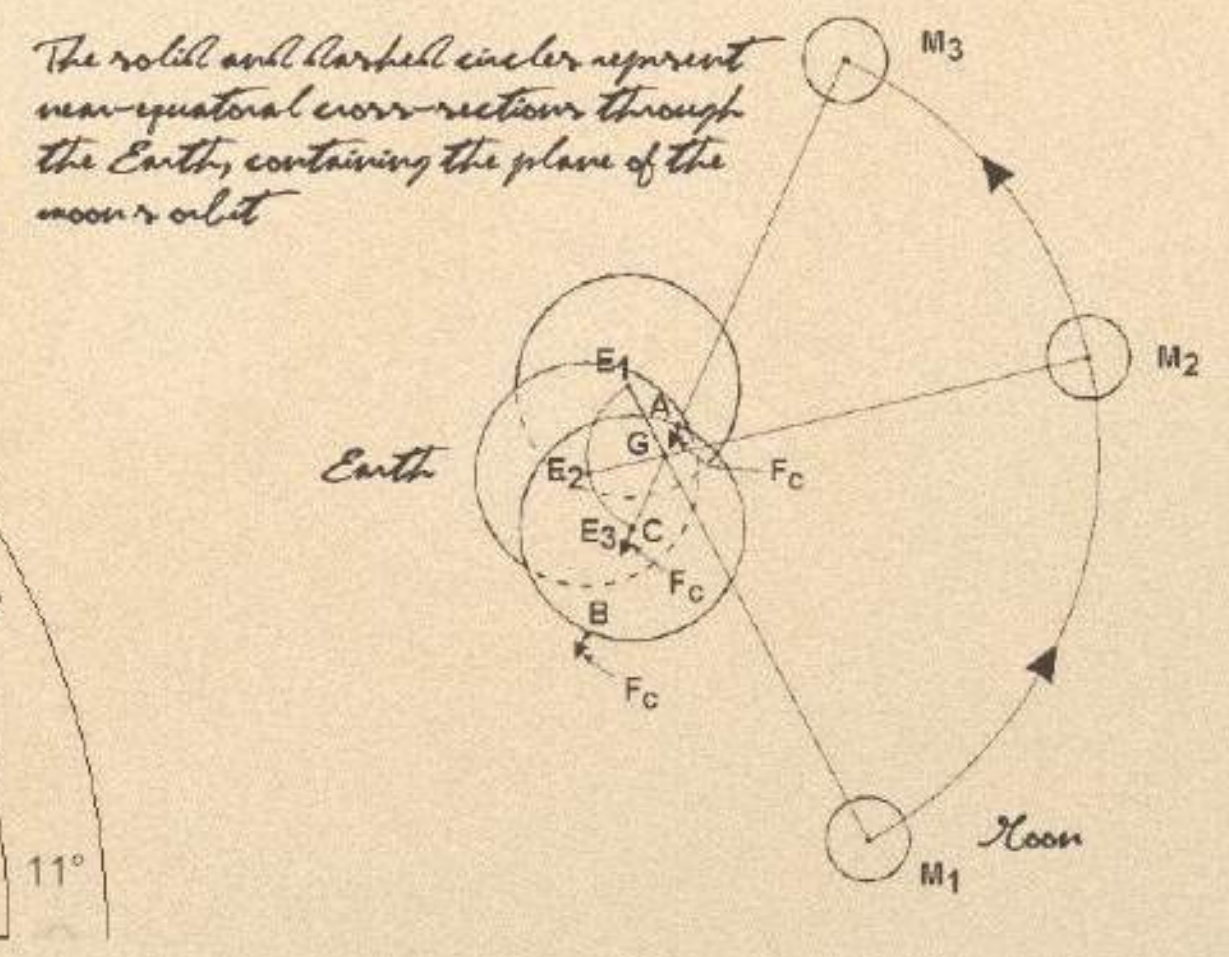
> The nature of your last correspondence can not be stated with any more clarity or terseness than this: Unacceptable.
>
> There are liberties we allow ourselves and vanities that all men have. We cannot, however, allow certain specific ideas to permeate the collective consciousness of modernity. There are things forbidden to man: Accessible heavens, higher forms, and the idea that the power of creation lies within man himself.
>
> Please advise us on a possible course of action before we are forced to act on this ourselves.
>
> Gregorio XIII

Ref: Romani Kalendarii a Gregorio XIII P M Restituti Explicatio

And the response. Outlining a possible solution to the problem:

> Your Holiness. We agree regarding the nature of certain knowledge and believe there is a rather elegant solution to our collective plight.
>
> As you may recall, several times in the recent past, members of our brotherhood have presented to the Holy See the inherent problems related to the Julian Calendar, the incorrect measurement of time between vernal equinoxes, and the accumulating errors resulting from this miscalculation.
>
> We propose a correction. A new Gregorian Calendar that considers these things and contains a subtle resolution to our larger problem.
>
> Galileo Galilei


The vernal equinox needs to be adapted to account for mathematical error that have happened over time.
Mc


The solid and dashed circles represent near-equatoral cross-sections through the Earth, containing the plane of the moon's orbit
M3
M2
M1
Earth
Moon
E1
E2
E3
A
B
C
G
Fc

The convenient truth of the idea resulted in a quickly agreed upon and ratified reformation. The Inter gravissimas was adopted and distributed throughout Christendom eventually resulting in the total adoption of the new Gregorian Calendar.

A final note from His Holiness:

> While we are certain to spend a great amount of time, effort and money continuing to erase the abomination of days past from our collective history, it is with great gratitude that this letter is written.
>
> Your Brotherhood is to be commended for your valiant sacrifice in our time of need, for your ingenuity in devising an appropriate solution to the resulting problems, and your compassion for understanding the frailty of our eternal, tenuous disposition.
>
> In closing, we have agreed to implement your new Calendar and accept the related daily difficulties the effects that these changes will produce.
>
> Effective immediately, in the year 1582 AD, the last day of the Julian Calendar was Thursday, October 4th, and the first day of the Gregorian Calendar was Friday, October 14th. All references to anything that happened during these dates is, from this day forward, forbidden.
>
> To be clear, let history show that these 10 days... ***never happened***.
>
> Gregorio XIII

Chapter Four

*“The **Madness,** the **Star Child,** and the **Celestial Madonna**”*

The Immortal City. 1956.
Silence... is not security.
WHO ARE YOU?

A BROTHER TO ALL MEN...AND PATRIARCH OF ***SHIELD.***
MY NAME IS LEONARDO DA VINCI.
THAT...THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE.
LEONARDO ***DIED.*** HE WAS BURIED BY MY MASTER, AND I, MYSELF, HAVE VISITED THE TOMB WHERE HIS BODY RESTS.
YOU SIMPLY CANNOT BE HIM.
AND YET HERE I STAND. HAVING DEFEATED DEATH AND TUNNELED THROUGH SPACE AND TIME TO BE HERE--NOW--WITH ALL OF YOU.
OH, THE WONDERS OF SCIENCE.
YOU WILL HAVE TO BE EXAMINED... ***STUDIED.***
AS YOU WISH.
BUT FIRST, WHY I AM HERE--I BRING A GIFT... FOR THE BROTHERHOOD...AND FOR ALL OF MANKIND...
THE ***HUMAN*** MACHINE.

CLEAR THE ROOM. *NOW.*
EVERYONE, LEONID.
IT'S OKAY...I WILL JOIN YOU BACK AT ITER. THERE ARE THINGS LEFT UNDONE. UNDERSTAND?
YES.

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF ALL THIS?
WHO ARE YOU REALLY?
INCREDIBLE.
I CANNOT BELIEVE IT, BUT YOU REALLY ARE HIM, AREN'T YOU?

YES, I AM.
VERY WELL. THEN KNOW THAT I AM ISAAC NEWTON.
ALSO A PATRIARCH OF *SHIELD*...AND THE CURRENT *MASTER* OF THIS PLACE.
HELLO, ISAAC.
IT'S VERY NICE TO MEET YOU.
THINGS HAVE *CHANGED*--THE WORLD HAS CHANGED--WHILE YOU WERE GONE.
AND NOT ALL FOR THE BETTER, I THINK.
WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS, MASTER LEONARDO?
WHY ARE YOU *REALLY HERE?*
TO DO MY DUTY, ISAAC. I AM A BROTHER OF THE *SHIELD*...
...I WILL STAND IN THE GAP.

Later. Through ITER.
HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW HIM?
MASTER NEWTON? AS WELL AS ANYONE, I SUPPOSE.
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN HE SEEMS TO HAVE A KEEN INTEREST IN ME--HE IS DEMANDING, BUT FAIR...
...AND HE ALWAYS PUSHES ME TO TRY HARDER... TO LEARN MORE. BUT IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO NOTICE THAT MOST OF THE MEN HERE FEAR HIM.
YOU SHOULD AS WELL, LEONID...
STOP.
JUST STOP BEING SO CRYPTIC AND TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON...TELL ME THE TRUTH.
VERY WELL.
I'M SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU THAT THERE IS A PASSAGE BEHIND THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.
LOOK FOR A SIGN--THE OPEN EYE...
WHEN YOU FIND IT...FOLLOW WHERE IT LEADS.
THE TRUTH--AND ENLIGHTENMENT--LIES WITHIN.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT MEANS THAT IN THE COMING YEARS, IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING ABOUT TODAY, IT SHOULD BE THIS:
THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING SOMEONE'S CHILD AND BEING SOMEONE'S SON.
AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE HORIZON AND BEYOND...
...BECOMING THE FIRST MAN IN SPACE.

Luoyang, Han Dynasty. 114 AD. Beyond the palace of Zhang Heng.
‹GODDESS... TELL ME HOW I MAY BE OF SERVICE?›
MAN. A (CHOICE/ DECISION/SACRIFICE) MUST BE MADE.
AT THE CENTER OF THIS (PLANET/WORLD)--LIKE MANY, MANY OTHERS--LIES A DORMANT CELESTIAL (EGG/EMBRYO). IN THE FUTURE, MILLIONS OF YEARS FROM NOW, THE (EGG/EMBRYO) WILL GESTATE, BIRTH A CELESTIAL AND--WITH THE GNAWING HUNGER OF A NEWBORN, IT WILL (CONSUME/ DEVOUR) THIS (PLANET/ WORLD).
THIS IS THE WAY THINGS (ARE/HAVE ALWAYS BEEN).
‹IF YOU WILL TAKE IT, I GIVE YOU MY WORD--WE WILL ENSURE THAT NO ONE DISTURBS THIS EGG.›
‹GIVING MAN ONE MILLION YEARS IS...GODDESS, TO PRESERVE THIS PLANET FOR THAT LONG, WE WILL HAPPILY OVERCOME ANY DIFFICULTIES.›

NO. YOU MISUNDERSTAND--LET ME FINISH.
ALL CELESTIAL BIRTHS HAVE OCCURRED WITHIN WORLDS. UNTIL NOW. I CARRY SOMETHING (NEW/UNIQUE/FORBIDDEN) WITHIN ME. (REPLICATION/REPRODUCTION) IS IMMINENT...
...I AM WITH CHILD.
COMPLETING THIS (PROCESS/CYCLE/FUNCTION) WILL EVENTUALLY (CONSUME/DESTROY) ME--A PRICE I AM WILLING TO PAY--BUT I MUST HAVE SUITABLE NOURISHMENT, AND BEGIN THE (PROCESS/CYCLE/FUNCTION) NOW.
(CHOOSE/DECIDE/SACRIFICE)... THIS EARTH, AND A CERTAIN QUICK EXTINCTION, OR THE MOON, AND THE APOCALYPTIC CHAOS THAT WOULD COME WITH ITS DESTRUCTION.
<MOST GLORIOUS CELESTIAL MOTHER--MIGHT I SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE...?>
<ONE THAT IS LIFE ITSELF, AND FITTING NOURISHMENT FOR A CHILD OF THE STARS.>

1956.

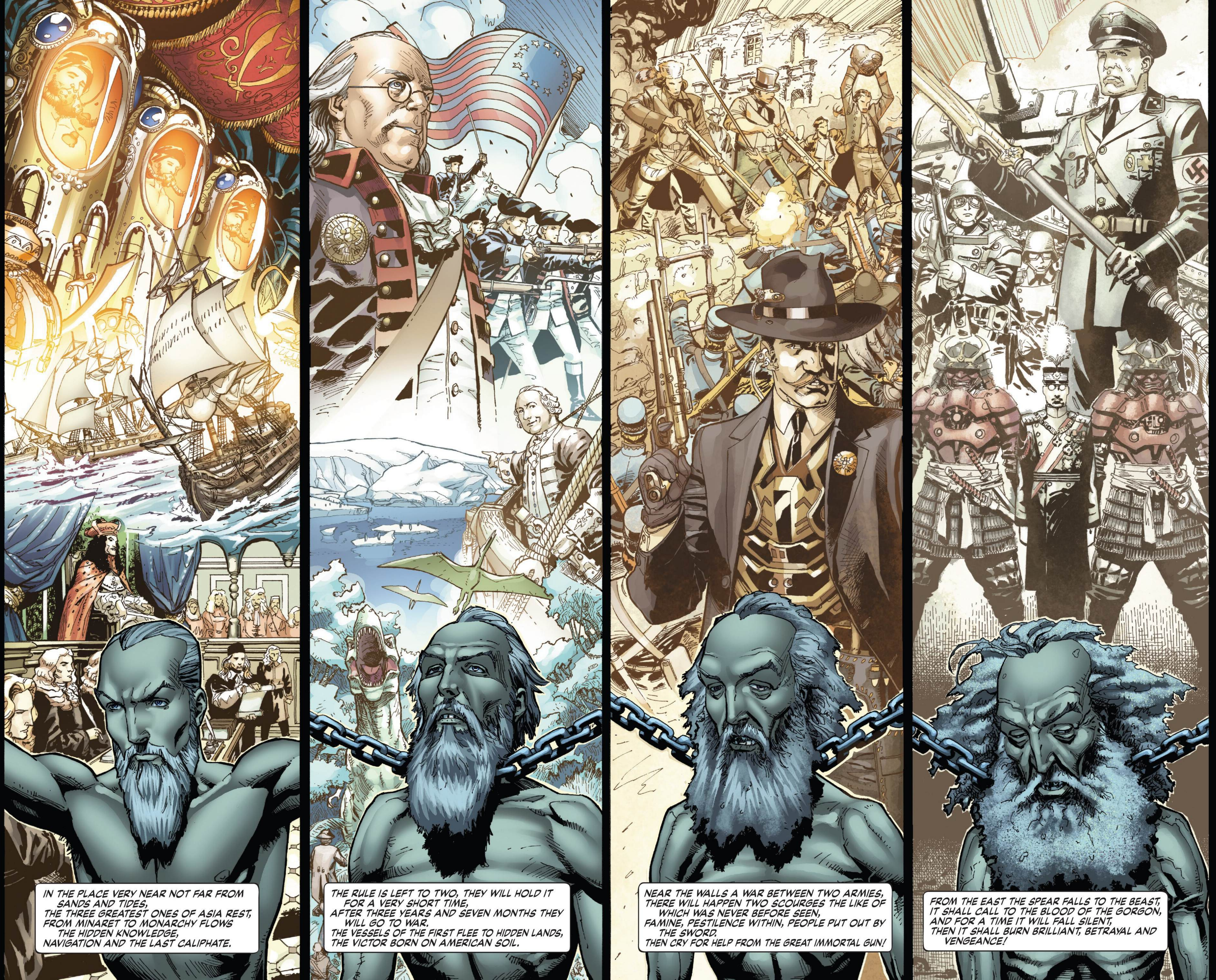
SEE, MASTER, SOMETHING GROWS WITHIN THE SUN.

1+2=3
YES, CHILD...INDEED IT **DOES.**

The Immortal City.
MY GOD... HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN LIKE THIS?

1652.
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE *IS* IMMORTALITY... OR SOMETHING AKIN TO THAT...SOMETHING I LIKE TO CALL ***"LONG ENOUGH."***
THIS--WHAT I HAVE MIXED UP FOR YOU HERE--THIS...CONCOCTION IS DIFFERENT...IT IS ***MORE...***
...DILUTED.
WE HAVE DIFFERENT NAMES FOR IT HERE ACCORDING TO LEVELS OF POTENCY: THE FOREVER COMPOUND. THE SECOND SUBSTANCE... THE INFINITY FORMULA.
IT'S HOW I BUY THE LOYALTY OF THE BROTHERHOOD. I REWARD WITH LONGEVITY. I PUNISH WITH MORTALITY.
YOU'D BE SHOCKED AT HOW EVEN GREAT MEN BREAK AND GROVEL FOR JUST A FEW MORE YEARS...
FOR YOU... THE FOREVER COMPOUND.
WITH THIS, YOU WILL LIVE ON, BUT BOTH YOUR BODY AND YOUR MIND WILL DECAY.
AND LOCKED UP IN THIS HOLE, YOU WILL GO MAD AS THE YEARS CRAWL BY...

ALL OF THIS CAN BE AVOIDED, OF COURSE. SIMPLY GIVE ME THE PROPHECY I NEED.
IMMORTALITY FOR A WORD.
NO.
CHUNK!
THEN I WILL WAIT.



IN THE PLACE VERY NEAR NOT FAR FROM SANDS AND TIDES,
THE THREE GREATEST ONES OF ASIA REST,
FROM MINARET TO MONARCHY FLOWS THE HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE,
NAVIGATION AND THE LAST CALIPHATE.
THE RULE IS LEFT TO TWO, THEY WILL HOLD IT FOR A VERY SHORT TIME,
AFTER THREE YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS THEY WILL GO TO WAR.
THE VESSELS OF THE FIRST FLEE TO HIDDEN LANDS,
THE VICTOR BORN ON AMERICAN SOIL.
NEAR THE WALLS A WAR BETWEEN TWO ARMIES,
THERE WILL HAPPEN TWO SCOURGES THE LIKE OF WHICH WAS NEVER BEFORE SEEN,
FAMINE, PESTILENCE WITHIN, PEOPLE PUT OUT BY THE SWORD.
THEN CRY FOR HELP FROM THE GREAT IMMORTAL GUN!
FROM THE EAST THE SPEAR FALLS TO THE BEAST,
IT SHALL CALL TO THE BLOOD OF THE GORGON,
AND FOR A TIME IT WILL FALL SILENT,
THEN IT SHALL BURN BRILLIANT, BETRAYAL AND VENGEANCE!

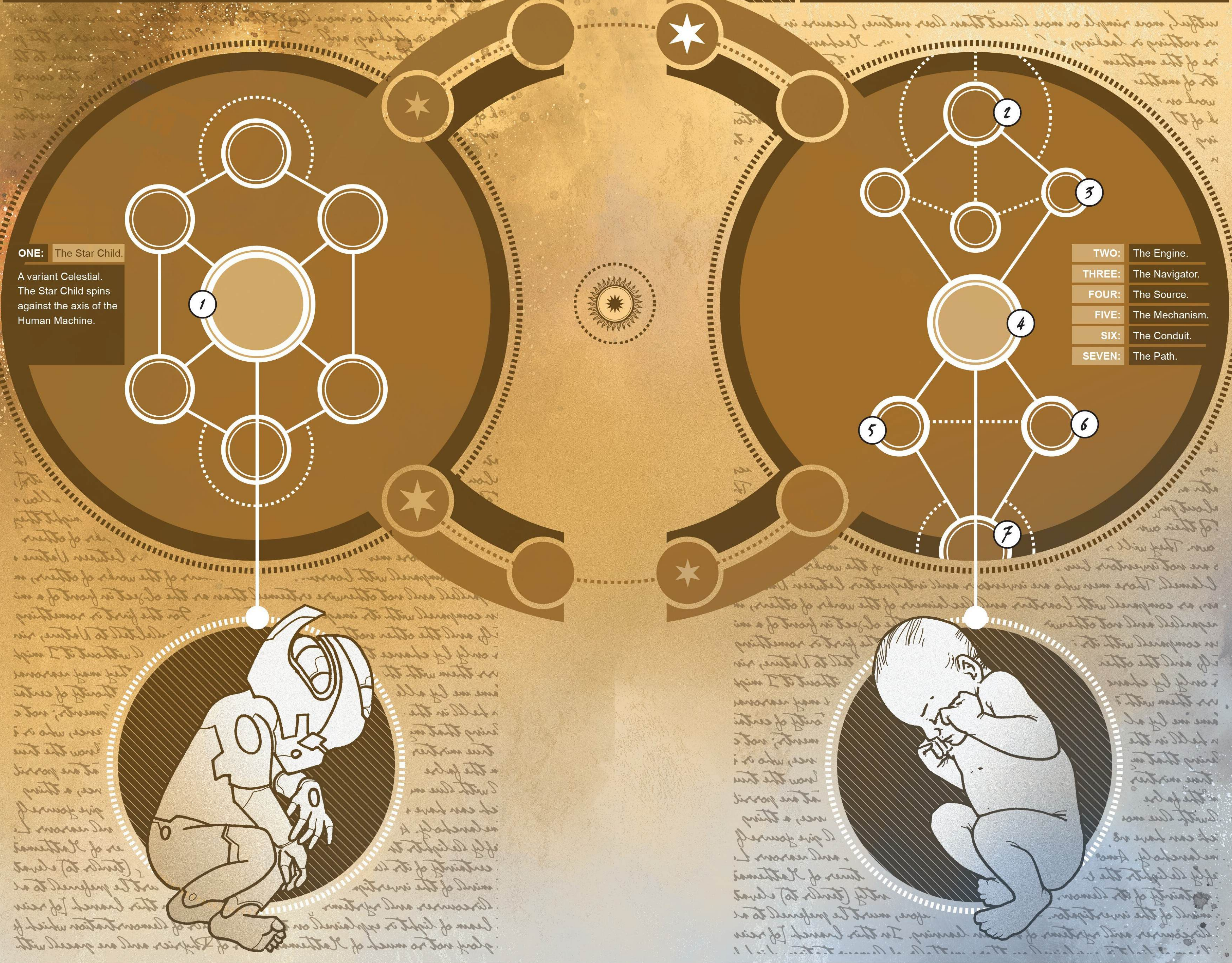
1956.
IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG.
500 YEARS.
HOW DID YOU STAND IT?
BECAUSE... I KNEW THAT ON THIS DAY, I WOULD BE FREED.
FREED BY A BOY WITH STARS BENEATH HIS SKIN.
France. 1645.
IT IS TOO MUCH.
YOU ASK TOO MUCH OF ME.
I NEVER ASK FOR MORE THAN WHAT SOMEONE CAN GIVE.
EVEN IF IT IS EVERYTHING.

HE WILL TORTURE ME FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS.
HE WILL LOCK YOU IN A HOLE WITH BOTH FREEDOM AND SALVATION FIVE FEET IN FRONT OF YOU.
TORTURE... IS TOO LIGHT A WORD.
WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?
BECAUSE YOU ARE NEITHER A PROPHET OR A SEER, BUT SOMETHING ELSE...
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM NOSTRADAMUS.
THE CATALYST.

AND THE *ARCHITECT* OF *REVELATION.*

*the*FOETUS*of*GOD

*the*HUMAN**MACHINE**



ONE: The Star Child.

A variant Celestial. The Star Child spins against the axis of the Human Machine.

TWO: The Engine.
THREE: The Navigator.
FOUR: The Source.
FIVE: The Mechanism.
SIX: The Conduit.
SEVEN: The Path.

Every obstacle yields to stern resolve. *He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind.*

Chapter Five

“The **Forgotten Machines** of **Nikola Tesla**”

There comes a time when a man realizes he is positioned between who he was and who he wants to be.
He stands at the event horizon.
A razor's edge existing between personal pragmatism and the dream of something better.
It is then that he must wake up and make a choice.
OHHH.
MY GOD.

Several days later.
HOW MUCH FURTHER?
NOT FAR...
NORTH. THROUGH THE TREES AND INTO THE NEXT CLEARING.

SO... HOW ABOUT THIS WEATHER?
IT'S HOT. MUCH HOTTER THAN IT SHOULD BE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, HOWARD.
SAME HERE, NATHANIEL.
BAD ENOUGH BEING LOST, BUT TO BE ALONE...AND WITH NO WAY HOME...
THANK GOD FOR SOLAR-POWERED SHORTWAVE RADIOS.
DID YOU NOTICE...
YEAH. THE STARS LAST NIGHT WERE A PRETTY GOOD INDICATOR...BUT OUR LOCATION RELATIVE TO THE SUN'S PATH...ITS SLIGHT DISCOLORATION...THIS HEAT...
I'M GUESSING WE'RE FIVE, MAYBE SIX HUNDRED ***THOUSAND*** YEARS IN THE FUTURE.
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
I HAVE A WORKING THEORY...
...BUT THERE'S NO WAY TO CONFIRM MY SUSPICIONS-- OR GET BACK HOME--UNTIL WE FIND THE ***NIGHT MACHINE'S*** BODY.
YOU'RE THINKING HIS POWER SOURCE...?
YEAH. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF DAYS AND I'VE HAD NO LUCK IN THE SURROUNDING AREAS... ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE THE ***RUINS.***
RUINS... WHERE?
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS.

Once, there was unity and simplicity of structure...
So we begin with Hydrogen.
I watched as the Star Child-- physically and intellectually-- grew at an exponential rate.
24 +17 41
267 171 +39 477
12901 36722 +316 49939
I watched as Leonardo da Vinci stood apart, still of the brotherhood, but something more.
At first the Immortals' loyalty to Newton held.
But then days became months...
...and the Hydrogen?

It became Helium.
And what was once so very simple became increasingly complex.
74 X6 444
324 212 X15 1,030,320
Da Vinci, you see, offered a different path.
And in a closed system, thermodynamics required migration--nature demanded equilibrium.
Newton's followers began to leave.
And Helium...

...became Carbon.
The basis of all living things.
It was then that the Star Child began to grasp the shape of things to come.
4 X^{1} X r2
(4/3) X^{1} X r3
On one side there would be *hope*.
On the other, *fate*.
And the Carbon?

It became Oxygen.
The Human Machine flickered to life.
The Star Child stood in the center of the Immortal City, staring up at what had been constructed there.
Machinery symbolizing the coming conflict.
Eternity...
...or the end of the world.

It was my father's Century Machine--Newton's *doomsday clock.*
And with its completion, the whispers of conflict became a war.
ARMIES WILL BE HEARD CLASHING WITHIN THE EARTH: THAT VERY SAME YEAR, **COMPLETION** AND **SCHISM** ONE HUNDRED YEARS ONE HUNDRED YEARS **ONE HUNDRED YEARS...**
YES... ***YES...***
...THE DRUMS OF **WAR** AND THE SUM OF ALL **FEARS.**
PAY ATTENTION, LEONID...***NOW*** THINGS GET INTERESTING.

1951.
WELL?
IT'S AS DONE AS IT'S GOING TO GET, HOWARD.
LET'S GO.
YOU DIDN'T TELL THEM, DID YOU?

I AGREED TO DO THIS. I AGREED BECAUSE I KNOW-- *BECAUSE WE BOTH KNOW*--THAT WE'RE UNIQUELY EQUIPPED TO DO THESE THINGS, AND THAT THEY HAVE TO BE DONE.
WHAT I DID ***NOT*** AGREE TO IS NEVER BEING ABLE TO SEE MY SON AGAIN.
THAT IS NOT WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY DISCUSSED WHEN WE WERE RECRUITED, AND I REFUSE TO ACCEPT ***THAT*** REALITY AS BEING A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.
I ***WILL*** COME HOME AGAIN.
BELIEVE WHAT YOU ***WANT***--BE A ROMANTIC. IT STIRS THE PRAGMATIST WITHIN ME...
WE'LL CERTAINLY NEED ***BOTH*** GOING FORWARD, WON'T WE, NATHANIEL?
HRMPH.
HERE. OUR FIRST TARGET DISAPPEARED IN 1943 ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY OF HIS NOTES AND TECHNOLOGY--BOTH WERE DEEMED GLOBAL SECURITY RISKS...
NOW HE'S RESURFACED. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO RECOVER HIS PARAPHERNALIA--HIS ***FOREVER MACHINES***--AND ANY RELATED DOCUMENTATION. THERE'S ALSO A MORE PERSONAL ASPECT TO THIS...
ALL THE FINER POINTS ARE IN THE DOSSIER.
HOW DID YOU DO IT?
GET THE DOSSIER? MY GOOD MAN, WE NOW WORK FOR A SECRET ORGANIZATION OLDER THAN CHRIST--OUR REACH EXTENDS DEEP INSIDE THE HALLS OF SECRET KNOWLEDGE. INFORMATION LIKE THIS SIMPLY FALLS INTO OUR HANDS LIKE MANNA FROM HEAVEN.
PREPARE FOR CONVERSION.
NO--THAT'S NOT WHAT-- HOW DID YOU BREAK IT TO YOUR SON?
THAT YOU'RE NEVER COMING HOME AGAIN.

I DIDN'T.
THEY'RE GOING TO FAKE MY DEATH. I BELIEVE AN AUTOMOBILE CRASH IS THE PLAN THAT WAS EVENTUALLY SETTLED ON.
YOU NEED TO STRAP IN.
IT'S FOR THE BEST.
IT IS.
I **LOVE** MY FAMILY...I DO, NATHANIEL. BUT THEY COVET MY TIME, SEEKING EVERY SPARE MOMENT FOR THEMSELVES--WHEN I KNOW I HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO THAN PLAY "FATHER."
I FELT MYSELF GROWING MORE RESENTFUL SO I CHOSE TO LEAVE BEFORE IT BECAME SOMETHING MORE.
IT WAS THE LOGICAL CHOICE.
IT WAS ***SELFISH***.
YES. I SUPPOSE IT WAS THAT ALSO.
INITIALIZING THE MAIN ENGINES.

SO, FOR YOU, THIS IS ABOUT A *HIGHER CALLING,* THE FATE OF THE WORLD, THE FUTURE OF MAN AND ALL THAT?
NO. WELL, *YES*... BUT, NO.
WHAT THEN?
DISCOVERY, DR. RICHARDS.

WELL... YOU WANTED ADVENTURE.
LOOKS DEEP ENOUGH.
DON'T BE A COWARD.
SPLASH!
PLOOSH!
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT...

YES. IT'S REALLY SOMETHING, ISN'T IT?
THERE WAS ACTUALLY A SET OF SMALLER RUINS ON THE EASTERN FACE OF THE MOUNTAIN, BUT THESE APPEAR TO BE MUCH OLDER.
NO TIME FOR SIGHTSEEING, THOUGH-- WE HAVE TO FIND THE NIGHT MACHINE. IF WE CAN COME UP WITH A PLAN THAT--
UM, NATHANIEL.
MAYBE WE SHOULD SETTLE ON DUMB LUCK...
FOLLOW THAT BIRD!

STAY AWAY!
YOU'VE ALREADY KILLED HIM ONCE!
HAVE YOU CHASED HIM TO THE END OF TIME TO FINISH THE JOB?
NO!
WE NEED HIM TO GET US ALL BACK HOME.
THEN FOR THAT TO BE POSSIBLE, YOU WILL FIRST HAVE TO ATONE FOR YOUR PREVIOUS SINS...

...AND FIND SOME WAY TO *SAVE* NIKOLA TESLA.

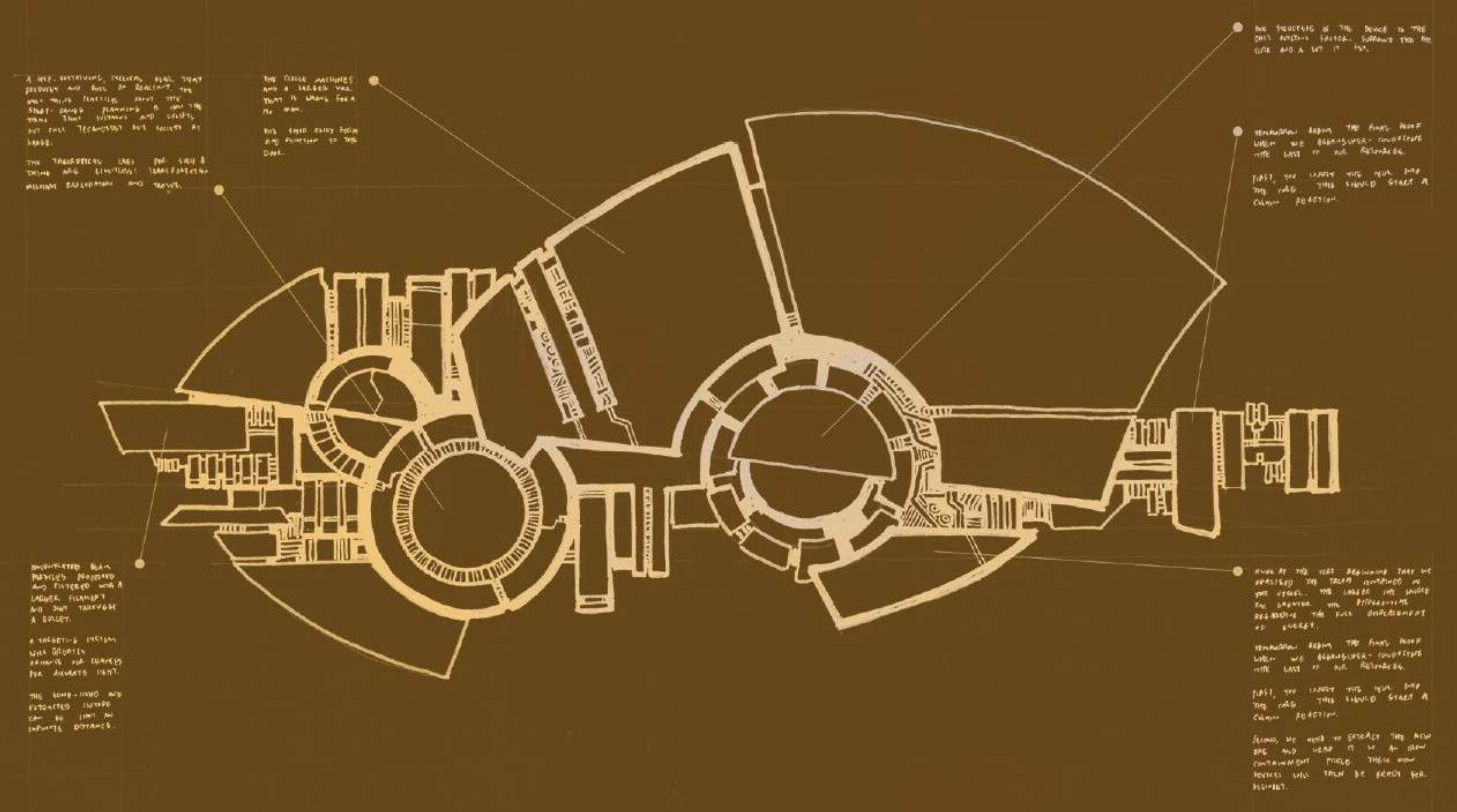
the FORGOTTEN MACHINES of NIKOLA TESLA

An inventory of recovered devices/inventions.

NOTE: Very little is known about these beyond a name and an estimation of their potential capabilities.

PULSAR CASCADE: A device capable of producing a short-burst, anti-matter wave.

LIVING MECHANISMS: Liquid Metal/Adaptable Circuit Systems - Chameleon Devices. These are highly-scalable tools designed to proportionally expand or contract in relation to the task at hand.



FIRMAMENT: Anti-gravity film/plating.

EXTINCTION ENGINE: A charged particle beam projector. An electrostatic repulsion-based accelerator with almost limitless range. A death beam.

LIFTER: An ion-propelled aircraft.

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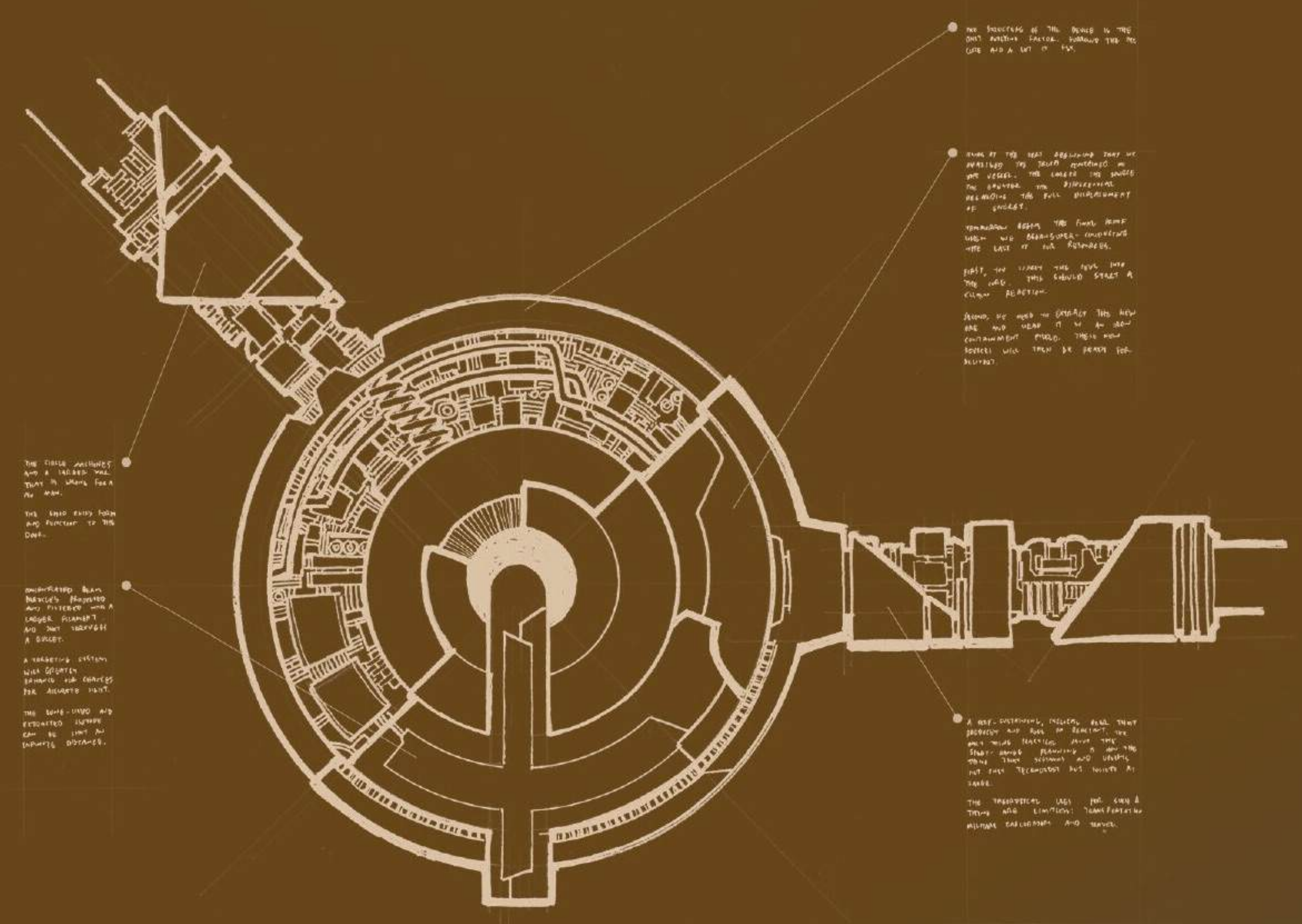
the FOREVER MACHINES of NIKOLA TESLA

An index of devices/inventions alleged to exist but never discovered/acquired.

NOTE: Very little is known about these beyond a name and an estimation of their potential capabilities.

THE DIVIDE: Particle disruption/restoration and reassembly. Theorized to be able to pass through any solid object with the only believed exception being Wakandan alloys.



THE ETERNAL DYNAMO: The Nullpunktenergie Matrix. A source of unlimited power.

THE NIGHT MACHINE: A quantum power driver.

FIVE FISTS OF SCIENCE: A coded historical record. The cryptovariable is contained within.

TEMPEST: A parasitic oscillator with high frequency charges. A ball lightning generator.

Chapter Six

“The *Master’s Hand*”

Rome. 1960.
I was a child, now become a man.
And what was wonder has become horror.
This is how it begins, the manifestation of change.
With an outward sign of inner decay.
A crack in the world.

The Immortal City.
I see clearly now-- there are *two sides*.
One full of men who believe that we are exactly who we are meant to be.
Who accept the fate they have been given and find enlightenment in the embracing of it.
And the other comprised of men who believe that there is no possibility beyond their reach.
That they are masters of their own destiny.

For years, these two ideas have warred within me.
But I see now that this battle was a lie.
I see clearly now...
...a third way.

And I will be a *dynamo* to power the change.

The Future.
ZZRRRRRMMMMMMM
READY WHEN YOU ARE, HOWARD.
GO AHEAD.
OKAY... DISCONNECTING THE POWER SOURCE.

AARRRGGH!
NIKOLA!
YOU'VE GOT...LESS THAN A MINUTE.
HURRY.
KILL HIM AGAIN AND I SWEAR...
NATHANIEL, I'M WORKING...
COULD YOU PLEASE PUT THE BIRD BACK IN HER CAGE?
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT.
I KNOW.

New York.
1955.
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.
WE NEED A LOCATION.
WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT... YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
SKWWWAK!
IS HE TALKING TO US, OR TO THE BIRD?
HE'S TALKING TO THE BIRD.
PERFECT.
LAST CHANCE, MR. TESLA.

GO!
ZZAK! ZZAK!
ZZHHHHHMMMM
AARRRGGGH!
ZA-ZAAAAKKK!

DAMMIT.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
I WASN'T... I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
SAVE IT. LET'S SEARCH THE PLACE...
ANYTHING?
NO.
THERE'S NOTHING COMING UP ON THE SCANNER, EITHER. *IT'S* NOT HERE.
"IT" REALLY ISN'T THE ACCURATE-- OR PROPER--WAY TO REFER TO A CHILD, HOWARD.
TO-MAY-TO, TO-MAH-TO. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM BACK TO... ***MY GOD!***
WHAT IS...?
OH.

COME ON, COME ON...
ALMOST OUT OF TIME, HOWARD.
DONE.
REPLACING THE CORE.
RECONNECTING THE SECONDARY SYSTEM.
AND THEN HERE'S THE PRIMARY--
GASP!

BA-BOOOM!
OOOOFF!
STOP, NIKOLA!
DON'T DO THIS!

WE NEED THEM.
TELL THE MACHINE TO GEAR DOWN. NOW.
WE JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE.
THAT JUST CANCELS OUT ONE OF THE DEBTS YOU OWE ME.
ENOUGH!
WE CANNOT RETURN WITHOUT THEIR HELP.
AND WE HAVE TO GET HOME.
A TEMPORARY TRUCE.
WORKS FOR ME.
TOGETHER ON THIS, UNTIL WE GET BACK.
WELL, THAT'S REALLY UP TO YOU, ISN'T IT? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SENT US HURTLING THROUGH TIME.
NO, I...
AHEM!
ACTUALLY, I BELIEVE THAT WAS ME.

Later.
THIS SHOULD PROVIDE THE PROPER CONDUIT.
UH-HUH. LOOKS GOOD.
IF YOU DON'T MIND, THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK YOU.
YES?
THAT DAY WE CONFRONTED YOU... THE DAY WE KILLED YOU... WILL YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?
NO. NO, I WON'T.
OKAY. WE'RE READY.

LIKE BEFORE--EXCEPT THIS TIME WE ACTUALLY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING--TESLA WILL POWER NATHANIEL, ENHANCING HIS ABILITY TO MOVE THROUGH TIME.
HOPEFULLY, THE WORK WE'VE DONE WILL ALLOW US TO BETTER CONTROL THE PROCESS.
READY?
UH-HUH.
Then take us home, Mr. Richards.

The Immortal City. 1960.
DROP THE BARRIER, LEONID.
IF I DO THAT, YOU'RE GOING TO *KILL* EACH OTHER. I DON'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN...
...I'M NOT GOING TO *LET* IT.
NEWTON IS TRYING TO ENGINEER THE END OF THE WORLD.
HE HAS TO BE STOPPED-- THIS *HAS* TO HAPPEN.
WHEN YOU KNOW THE END RESULT OF SOMETHING, IT IS NOT MADNESS TO EMBRACE IT...IT IS MADNESS TO RUN FROM IT.
THIS IS NOT HOW THE WORLD ENDS...
...BUT IT WILL BE THE END OF LEONARDO DA VINCI.
DROP THE SHIELD, SON.
NO. I'M NOT DOING IT.
VERY WELL.
ATTACK THE FREQUENCY. PIERCE THE BARRIER.

NO.
CH-CHUNK!
BOOM!
BOOM!
BOOM!

SEE.
ONE *CANNOT* AVOID HIS FATE.
FIRE EVERYTHING!
LEONID!
YOU HAVE TO DROP THE SHIELD! WE CAN'T DEFEND OURSELVES...
YOU'RE KILLING US!
I believed...
I believed in an idea.
BOOM!
OOEENK
Of a place where knowledge was boundless and the only thing greater was the imagination that fueled it.
A place beyond ingrained ideas.
Beyond limits. Beyond the things that made us normal.
A place where a man could become something more than the sum of what he had been taught.
I thought it would be this place... this city...
...my home.

I was wrong.
WHAT IS...?
IT IS A GREAT BURDEN: UNDERSTANDING.

TO BE UNTETHERED FROM PRECONCEPTIONS...
...TO BE OPEN TO ALL POSSIBILITIES.
YOU SEE, LEONID, EVEN VISIONARIES FALL PREY TO PREJUDICE. *THEY KNOW HOW THINGS SHOULD BE.*
I COULDN'T STOP THEM.
YOU WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO.
SOME BATTLES MUST BE FOUGHT.
SOME CONFLICTS... *INEVITABLE.* AND THIS ONE HAS A MODICUM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.
IT IS THE ONE FIGHT THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED...
...A WAR OF *IDEAS.*
CAN YOU TELL ME WHY THEY ARE WRONG, LEONID?
THEY BUILD WALLS AROUND WHAT THEY BELIEVE.
YES. AND TOGETHER WE MUST TEAR THEM DOWN.
WHO *ARE* YOU?
I AM *NECESSITY,* AND THE *CAUSE* OF MUCH OF THIS.
I AM THE *FOREVER MAN.*
OTHER MEN HAVE CALLED ME MASTER.
BUT MY FRIENDS, LEONID...

THEY CALL ME MICHELANGELO.

Chapter Seven

“Terribilita”

TINK
TNK
TNK
TINK
I AM NOT USED TO BEGGING...
...ARE YOU TRYING TO ***HUMBLE*** ME, YOUNG MAN?
BECAUSE I FEAR YOU MAY BE HAVING SOME SUCCESS.
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I ASK YOU TO ***JOIN*** US, MICHELANGELO?
TINK
TNK

Rome.
1502.
I ASSURE YOU, MASTER DA VINCI, INSULT IS NOT MY INTENT...

I AM SIMPLY BUSY WITH...*OTHER THINGS.*
OUR BROTHERHOOD IS TASKED WITH PROTECTING MANKIND. THIS REQUIRES MEN WITH VISION...MEN LIKE *YOURSELF.*
THERE ARE THINGS... GOING *ON,* THINGS HAVE HAPPENED THAT DEFY WONDER.
EXACTLY WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT, MASTER DA VINCI?
A HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE WORLD, MICHELANGELO.
AH, SECRETS AND MYSTERIES...
LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.
IF ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE YOU POSSESS HAS BEEN *KEPT SECRET...*
...HOW IS IT THAT I KNOW EVERYTHING *YOU* KNOW AND *MORE?*

HOLD! ***HOLD!***
HERE THEY COME AGAIN!
The Immortal City. 1960.
The battle for the Brotherhood of the Shield is underway.

YOU SAID THIS WAS NECESSARY... BUT, MY GOD...
...I CANNOT JUST WATCH THIS AND DO *NOTHING.*
I HAVE TO TRY AND STOP THIS...
I HAVE TO TRY *AGAIN.*
NO, LEONID.
PATIENCE. YOU MUST WAIT...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? MEN ARE *DYING... RIGHT THERE... NOW!*
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING AND QUICKLY--WE'RE *RUNNING OUT OF TIME.*
TIME?
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT... *TIME?*

The Deviant Capitol. Ashomia. 1630.
COME OUT NOW, MORDA!
CORRUPTION! ***CORRUPTION!***
HE HAS STOLEN OUR KNOWLEDGE... AND LEFT YOU TO ANSWER FOR IT!
OH, OHHH...
WE HAVE MADE A MISTAKE.
BIG MISTAKE IN BONDING.
NEWTON STEAL. NEWTON ***LIE!***

BAH!
MORE MAN! CORRUPTION!
I CUT YOU...AND GIVE TO OTHERS.
SAVE MORDA. SAVE BABY.
NO, THAT IS **NOT** WHAT WILL HAPPEN...
I AM NOT ISAAC NEWTON, MORDA... I OFFER YOU TRUTH, UNDISTILLED:
TODAY, YOU WILL DIE. BUT IF YOU WISH IT, I CAN SAVE YOUR CHILD.
SAVE BABY?
TAKE BABY?
PROMISE. NO NEWTON!
I CANNOT DO THAT.

PROMISE! NO NEWTON!
I'M SORRY. I CAN ONLY PROMISE THAT HE WILL LIVE... NOTHING ELSE.
TAKE BABY.
BABY LIVE.
CRASH

The Sinkhole.
Bendy Time.
SEE, SEE UP IN THE SKY?
WHAT'S THAT?
SKWAK!

Skwak?
OHHHHH.
IT SEEMS YOU HAVE BEEN **CHOSEN,** LITTLE BIRD. YOU MUST CARE FOR HIM AND RAISE HIM AS YOUR OWN.
HERE, TIME WILL SEEM TO FLOW VERY STRANGELY...YOU BOTH MUST STAY UNTIL THE MAN WHO HURLS LIGHTNING FINDS THIS PLACE.
YOU WILL LOVE HIM.
AND HE WILL LOVE YOU **BOTH.**
I HAVE BEEN **CHO-SEN.**
YES.
AND YOU WILL NEED TO GIVE HIM **THIS.**

Rome. 1642.
Galileo Galilei, the head of the Brotherhood.
ISAAC... WHAT ARE YOU...?
GAKKK!

WHO ARE *YOU*...?

Rome. 1502.
YOU CANNOT *POSSIBLY* KNOW THE THINGS I KNOW.
OH, REALLY?
TELL ME, MASTER DA VINCI...HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF DÉJÀ VU?
NO.
OF COURSE YOU HAVEN'T. YOU DON'T SPEAK FRENCH AND ÉMILE BOIRAC HASN'T EVEN BEEN BORN AND EVEN IF HE HAD YOU *STILL* WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND QUANTUM MECHANICS...
WHAT ARE YOU...?
HERE. A SMALL PIECE OF THE DIVINE.
ALL NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE.
WHAT?
SO... WHERE WERE WE?
DÉJÀ VU.
IN WHAT YOU CALL THE FUTURE, MOST SCIENTISTS THEORIZE THAT THIS PHENOMENON IS CAUSED BY RECALL ANOMALIES--A TYPE OF CROSSED WIRE BETWEEN SHORT AND LONG-TERM MEMORIES.
THIS IS *INCORRECT.* DÉJÀ VU IS ACTUALLY A QUANTUM RESONANCE ACROSS PARALLEL UNIVERSES. MOMENTS WHERE, IN ACTUALITY, YOU EXIST IN THE EXACT SAME SPOT, DOING THE EXACT SAME THING, IN ANOTHER REALITY.
DID YOU KNOW THAT DÉJÀ VU IS MUCH MORE COMMON AT A YOUNGER AGE THAN OLDER? IT MAKES PERFECT *SENSE,* REALLY, QUANTUM DIVERGENCE INCREASES WITH AGE--MORE CHOICES, MORE TANGENTS.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
OF *COURSE* YOU DO...

I AM HERE NOW.
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE.
I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE.

I... I...THIS IS...
WHAT *NOW?*
I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO ASK THAT.
NOW *YOU* MUST SAVE THE *WORLD.*
YOU HAVE DESIGNED A GREAT *CITY.* IT MUST BE BUILT.
IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE A DOOR THAT LEADS TO A *SEEING PLACE.*
THE KEY TO THAT DOOR LOOKS LIKE THIS. MAKE ONLY *ONE.*
YOU MUST SAVE THE *DYNAMO.* HE WILL BE AT THE SEEING PLACE.
THERE IS A *GOD* GROWING IN THE SUN.
THIS... IS THE *HUMAN MACHINE.*

France. 1645.
I HAVE ALREADY DECIDED THAT I WOULD DO WHAT YOU HAVE ASKED OF ME: *IMPRISONMENT* FOR A MUCH GREATER CAUSE.
WHY DO YOU LINGER?
BECAUSE THERE IS ONE THING I HAVE YET TO TELL YOU... A TRUTH ABOUT THE WAY THINGS *REALLY ARE.*
A PART OF YOU WILL REMAIN CHAINED FOREVER. IN SOME WAYS, YOU WILL NEVER ESCAPE.
...WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
BECAUSE, IN THAT VERY SAME WAY, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE... *FREE.*

The Immortal City. 1960.
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT... *TIME?*
THE BATTLE BEING FOUGHT IS BETWEEN MEN WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN *CHOOSE* THEIR FUTURE AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY *CANNOT.*
FREE WILL IN OPPOSITION TO FATE.
YES.
"AND IT'S TIME YOU LEARNED DA VINCI AND NEWTON ARE BOTH WRONG.
"IT'S TIME YOU LEARNED THEY ARE BOTH *RIGHT.*"
YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A THIRD WAY, LEONID...
...THIS IS IT.

"TIME IS NOT *LINEAR.*"
THERE IS NO GREAT CAUSE AND EFFECT.
THERE IS NO FINAL DESTINY.
"WE MUST LIVE OUR LIVES...*IN BETWEEN.*"
LOOK NOW, LEONID...

"LOOK!
"IT IS WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR...
"IT IS WHAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMING..."
DAD!

"IT IS *HOPE.*"

Chapter Eight

“Fire”

Florence.
1503.
BE PERFECTLY STILL, MASTER. WHAT MATTERS NOW IS A STABLE CONNECTION.
LORENZO?
I DON'T THINK THE NOSE IS RIGHT.
LORENZO!
EH?
THE CONNECTION.
AND MAKE SURE IT'S PROPERLY FIXED...

OR ALL OUR EFFORTS WILL HAVE BEEN FRUITLESS.
THE GOLEM WILL REMAIN LIFELESS, OR WORSE... INCOMPLETE.
THIS IS SUDDENLY RELIGION AND NOT SCIENCE?
NOT A GOLEM, PIETRO...A **DECOY.**
I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE THIS IS POSSIBLE.
AND ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR THE LIGHTNING?

YES. THEN ALL THE KNOWLEDGE FROM OUR MASTER'S BRAIN WILL BE TRANSFERRED INTO THE...*DECOY.*
IN MANY OF THE WAYS THAT MATTER, HE WILL BE A *PERFECT* DUPLICATE OF ME.
AND HE WILL LIVE OUT HIS DAYS AS *I* WOULD HAVE.
DO NOT WORRY...I HAVE FREELY CHOSEN A DIFFERENT LIFE. DO NOT FEEL SHAME...
YOU ARE *NOT* A THIEF.
NOW, WE WILL WORK WHILE WE WAIT...
THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE, AND VERY LITTLE TIME IN WHICH TO *DO* IT.

The Immortal City.
DAD!
HELLO, SON.
WHAT THE HELL...?
...LOOKS LIKE A WAR ZONE.
WAR INDEED.

AND FOR A MOMENT... I SAW MY *END*.
AND YOU STILL *SHALL!*
EH?
RRAARRR!!
OOOFFFF!

STARK...
...HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO **RULES** HERE?
I HAVE ***NOT,*** MASTER NEWTON.
BUT I DID NOT MAKE THIS FOR WAR AND CERTAINLY NOT FOR ***MURDER.***
WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE?
SCHISM!
REBELLION!
BROTHERS ABANDONING BROTHERS... ABANDONING WHAT WE HAVE ***BELIEVED*** IN.
IT ***WILL NOT*** STAND.
THOSE LOYAL WILL NOT PERMIT IT.
LOYAL?
LOYAL TO ***WHAT...?***

A LIE?
YOU HAVE BOUGHT THEM WITH THE PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY. YOU HAVE **HOARDED** IT...DOLING OUT EXTENDED LIFE IN RETURN FOR THE FAVOR OF SYCOPHANTS...
"...WHAT WILL THEY SAY WHEN THEY LEARN THAT THE WELL OF THE ELIXIR OF LIFE HAS RUN DRY?
"WHAT WILL THEY DO WHEN THEY LEARN DEATH WAITS FOR THEM JUST AS ANY ***OTHER*** MAN?"
WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN NO LONGER ***BUY*** THEIR LOYALTY?
A NECESSARY LIE.
A SMALL ONE TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING...

I STILL HAVE THE GREATER TRUTH--*THE WORLD ENDS! THE WORLD ENDS!*
IT'S INESCAPABLE AND MUST BE *SERVED!*
NO. WE KNOW THE TRUTH NOW.
THESE MEN AND I HAVE SEEN THE FAR FUTURE... BREATHED ITS AIR, TOUCHED ITS EARTH.
WE HAVE *LIVED* WHAT YOU SAY IS IMPOSSIBLE.
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO CLEAVE THE TRUTH FROM THE LIES. WE MUST CALL A *COUNCIL.* BUT WHO WILL SIT IN JUDGMENT?
OH, I THINK IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, REALLY...
TWO IDEAS--REPRESENTED BY *TWO MEN...*IDEAS THAT DIVIDE *TWO FATHERS.*
WHY NOT LET THE *BOY* DECIDE?

Later.
YOU HAVE IT?
IF NEEDED, I WILL BE READY.
BROTHER, I'M SORRY, BUT I MUST ASK--ARE YOU ARMED?
I HAVE MY *MIND,* DON'T I?
GET OUT OF MY WAY.
THE CONCLAVE-- *JUDGMENT*-- BEGINS NOW.

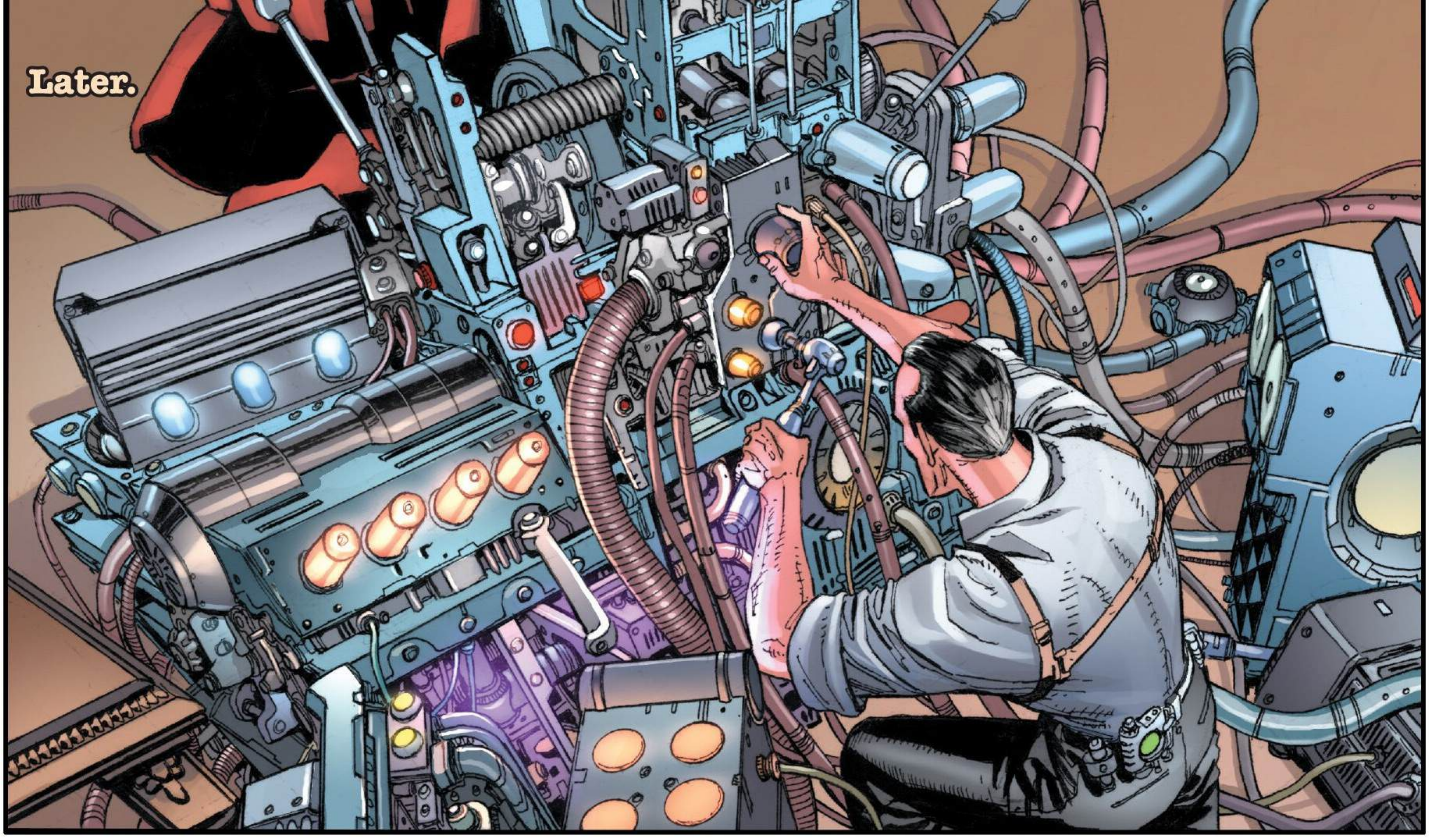
HOW DO WE START?
WITH THE NIGHT MACHINE.
HE WILL CHARGE THE ***SPIRIT***...
...WHILE STARK WILL ENGAGE THE ***TRUTH***.
CHA-CHUNK!

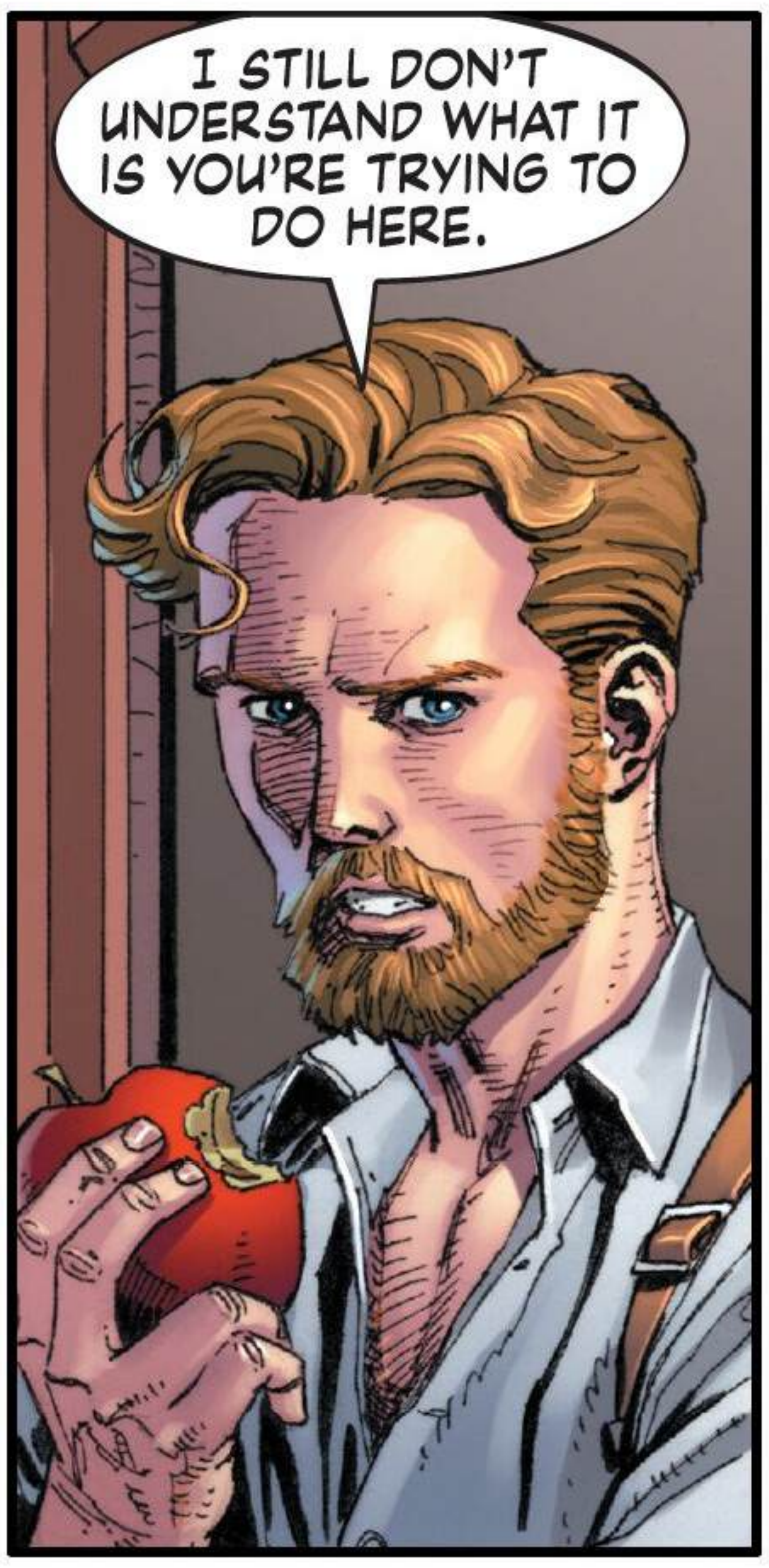
Do I believe or do I follow?
I AM FULL OF DOUBT.
How are these things my choice
if everything is ordered?
AM I AN INDIVIDUAL, A
PIECE IN A GREATER PLAN,
OR SIMPLY A FOOL?
I do not trust Michelangelo.
I fear trust and therefore
have faith in no one. I am
alone. I have never loved.
I have never allowed myself
to love. I HAVE SACRIFICED
EVERYONE.
Facts, only facts matter.
I KNOW THE TRUTH.
No one lives forever.
Everything is finite.
Everything is a resource.
All is ordained. I HAVE
USED MANY MEN TO
ACCOMPLISH MY GOALS.
It is their purpose.
It is all they are good for.
I HAVE KILLED FOR MY
CAUSE. I have killed when
it was necessary.
I MURDERED GALILEO.
I HAVE SACRIFICED EVERYTHING.
I HAVE KILLED, AND WILL KILL AGAIN, AND WILL RACE GOD TO END MAN.

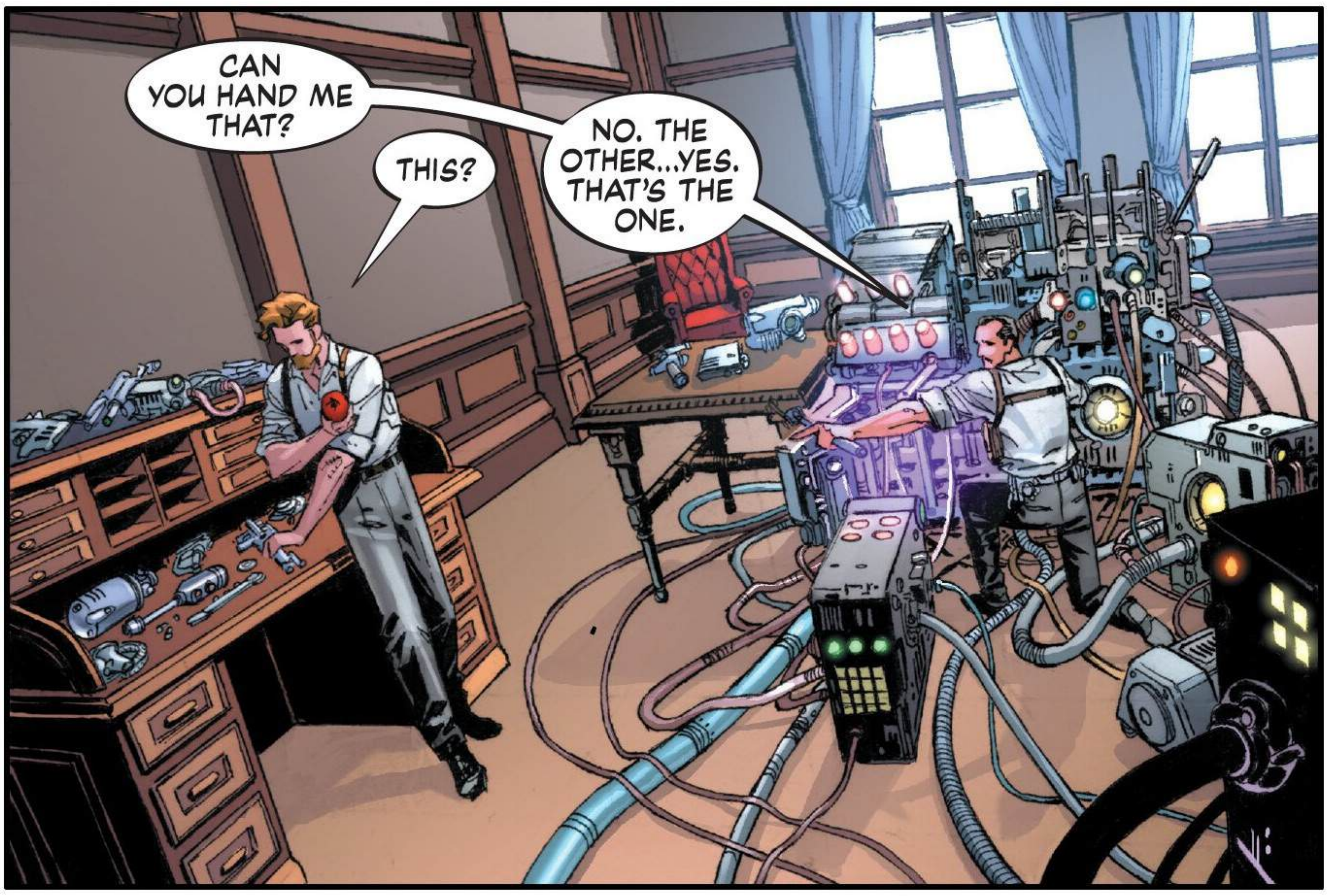
THERE, LEONID...
...NOW YOU HAVE THE TRUTH. ALL OF IT.
ALL OF IT? ALL OF IT?
THAT WAS NOT TRUTH--IT WAS DESIRE--UNSPOKEN MOTIVATION...
...NOTHING MATTERS BUT THE END RESULT!
NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN WHAT'S COMING!
I AM RIGHT!
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT.
I WON'T BELIEVE THAT.
I DO NOT WANT TO CHOOSE.
BUT IF I MUST, I CHOOSE BROTHER DA VINCI.
THERE IT IS...HE HAS DECIDED.
AND NOW I SAY ISAAC NEWTON FORFEITS HIS LIFE.
SOMETHING TOO LONG IN COMING.

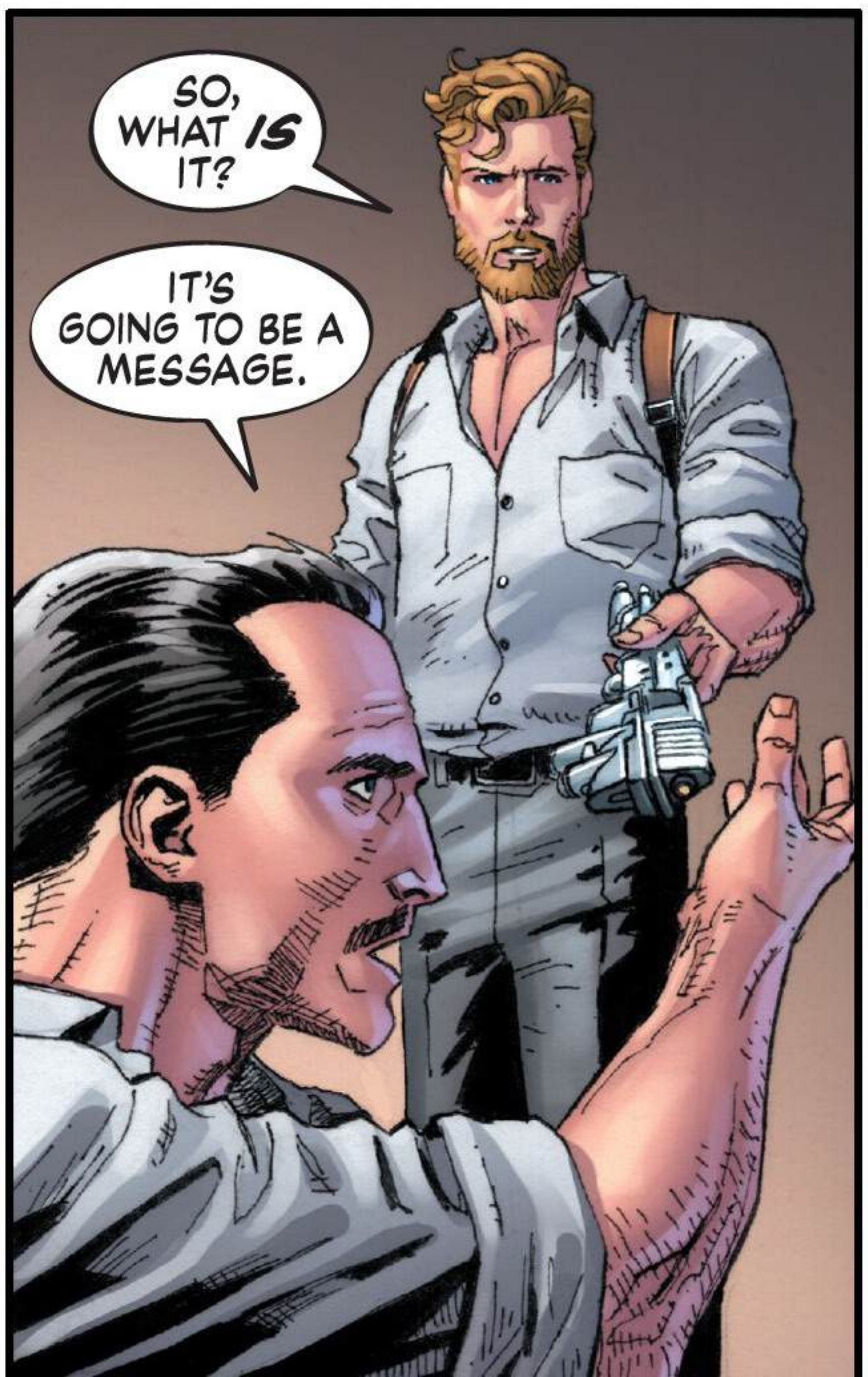
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION...
YOU CAN'T KILL ME--I'VE BEEN DEAD ALL ALONG.
I KNOW HOW THE WORLD ENDS... WITH ME WATCHING IT BURN.
MASTER!
STOP HIM!
TUNK
FWISS SHHH!
ZWAM!

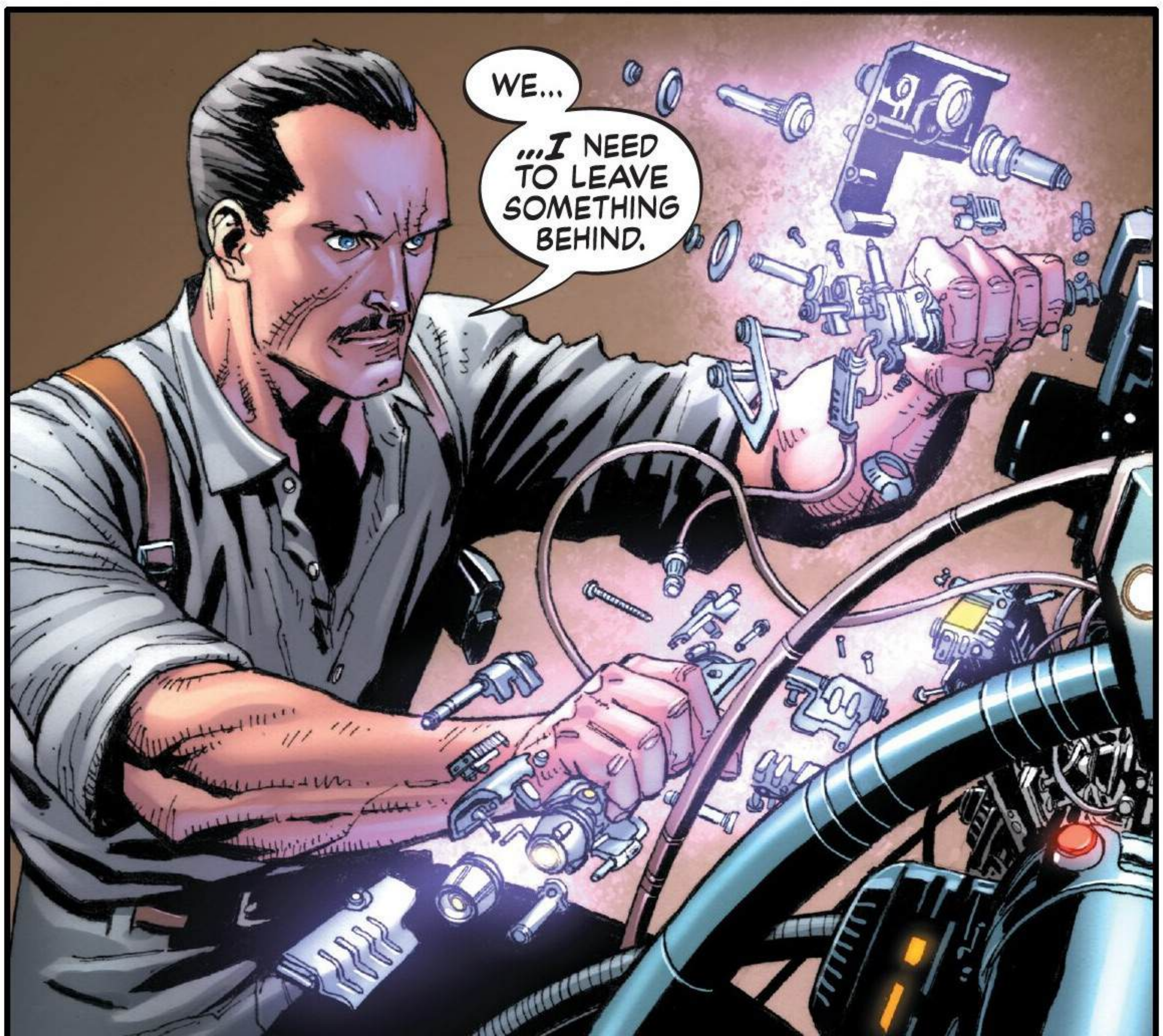
I DIDN'T SEE *THAT* COMING.
I DID...
...THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS HAPPENS.
AND WE THINK HE WENT...?
YES. TO THE FUTURE.
SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
YOU FOLLOW HIM.
TO THE *VERY END.*


Later.


I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.


CAN YOU HAND ME THAT?
THIS?
NO. THE OTHER...YES. THAT'S THE ONE.


SO, WHAT *IS* IT?
IT'S GOING TO BE A MESSAGE.


WE...
...*I* NEED TO LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND.

YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, RIGHT?
I'M NOT WRITING A WILL, HOWARD.
I PLAN ON COMING **BACK**.
MY NAME IS **HOWARD STARK...**
...AND THIS IS A RECORD OF WHY WE **WAR**.

LOOK HIGH--LOOK LOW...
I'M SURE HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN IT SOMEWHERE.
RICH MEN ARE CARELESS-- THE WEALTHY, WASTEFUL.
X=?
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
LIFE!
LIFE!
WITH MORE ELIXIR WE COULD LIVE ***FOREVER*** AND--
EH?

Born in the heart of our sun, the Star Child's language was arithmetica--
--exponential Celestial growth first meant the mastery of basic mathematics, and in the years that came after, algebra, calculus and the things that followed those--
--Complex Analysis, Abstract Algebra, Real Analysis, Topology--and on...
...until he came to this: a wild arithmetic strain... something new.
The Quiet Math.
2060
The greatest human scientist to ever live had attempted to Solve for Everything and succeeded!
And that knowledge drove the Star Child *mad*.

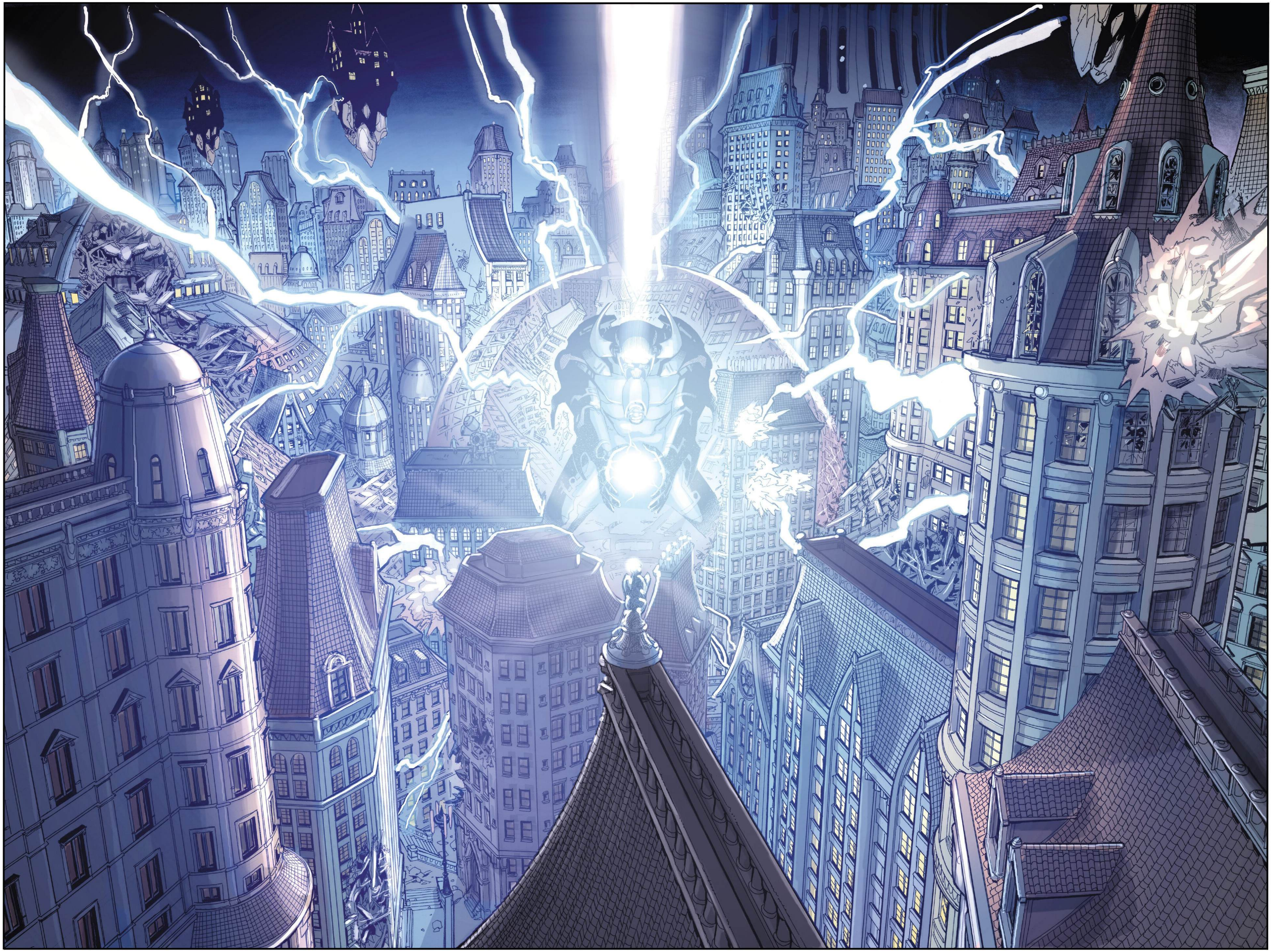
See, Newton was right all along.
Everything *ends.*

Chapter Nine

“The Fall”

The Immortal City.

? = 1/0
1/0 = 1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
1/0
X = X
X = ?
X = ◎
◎ = ?
◎ = 2060
2060
2060
2060
2060



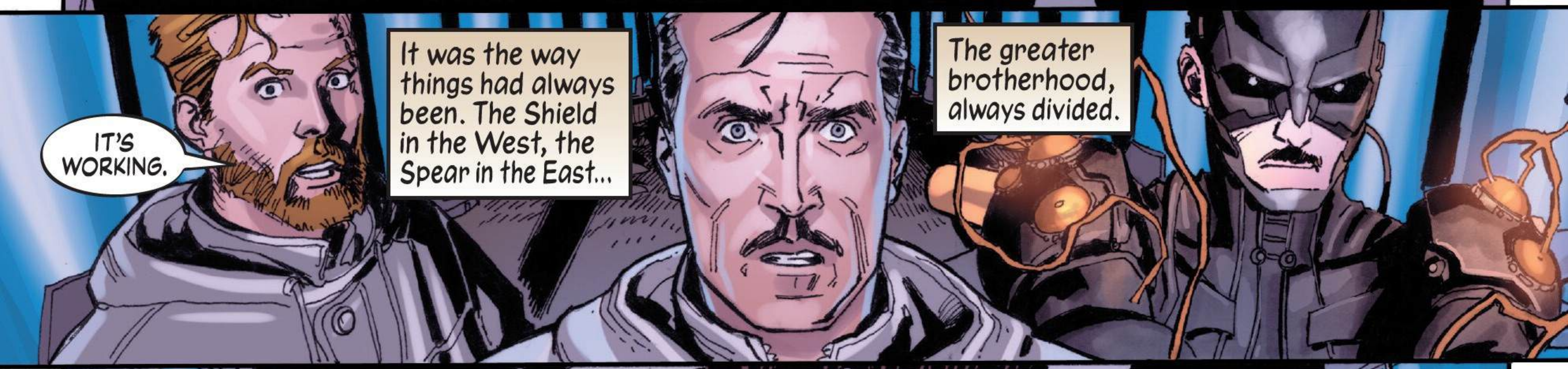
Later.
I ASSUME THIS MEANS THERE'S A PLAN.

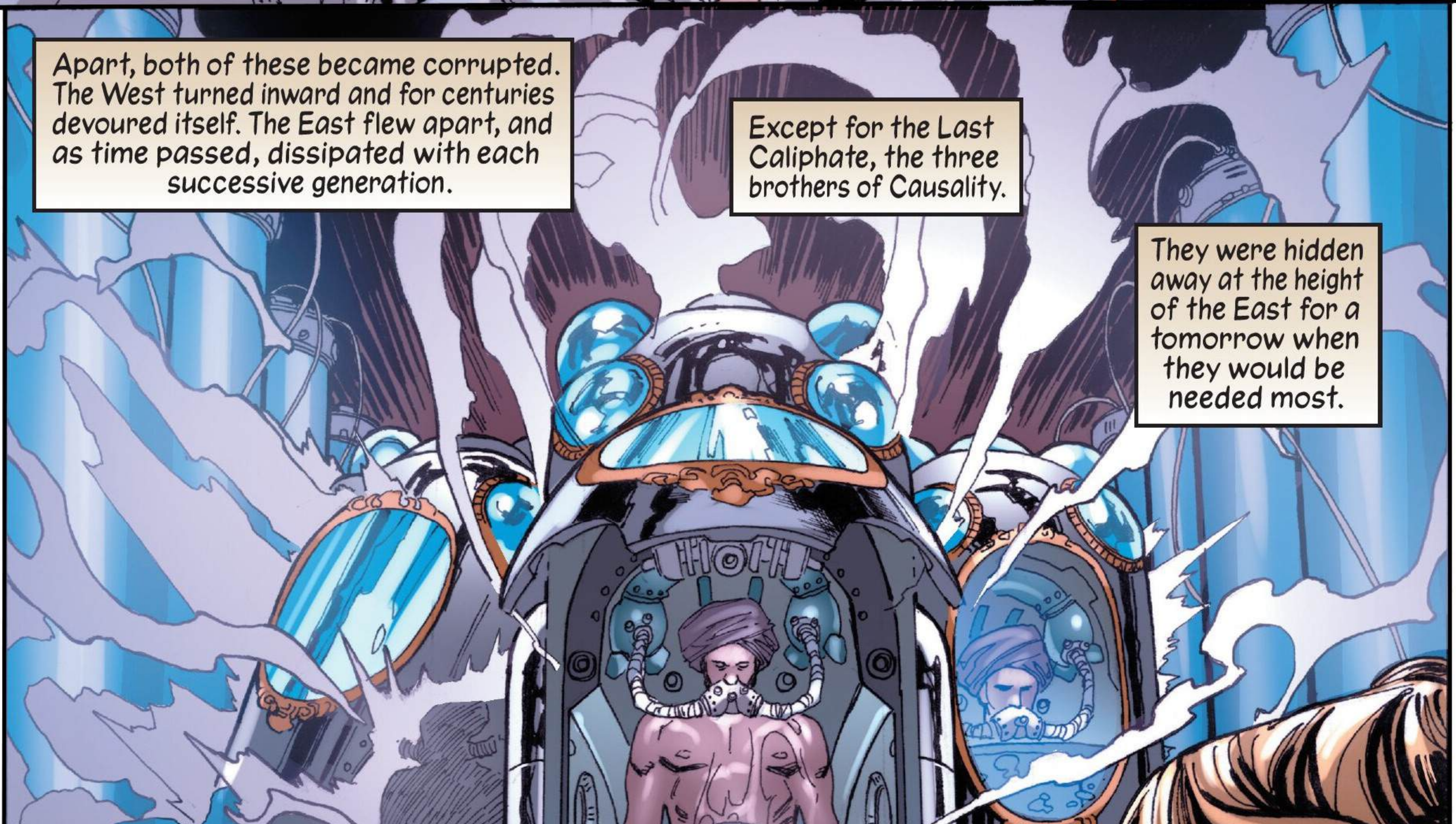
OF COURSE.
THE STAR CHILD SHADOWS NEWTON, SO WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THEM...
...TO THE FUTURE.

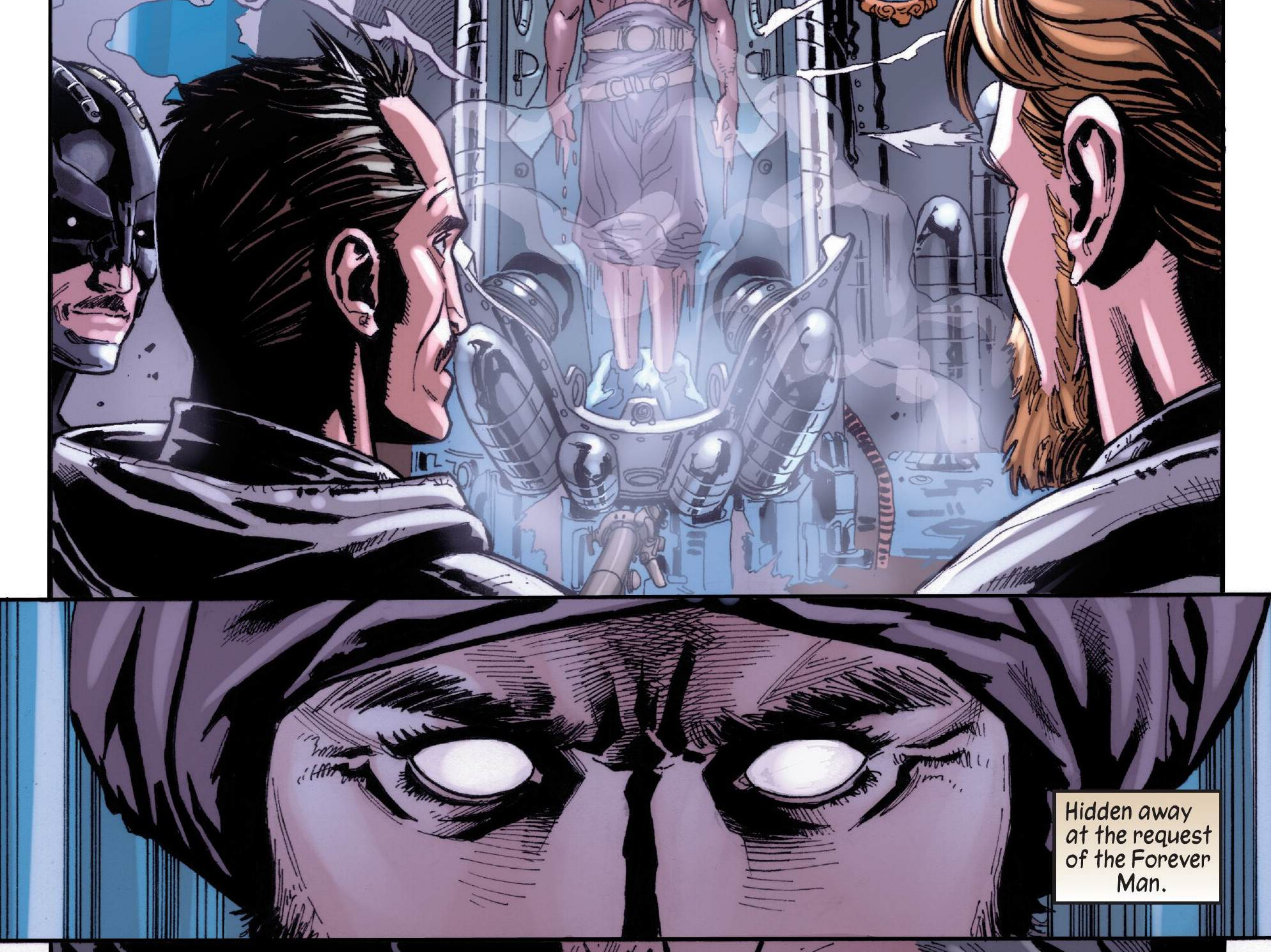
Chapter Ten

“All Together Now”

The Zargos Mountains.
IF WE'RE GOING TO GO FORWARD--IF THERE REALLY *IS* A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR--WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO IT TOGETHER.
THIS WAY.
IT IS NOT CRYOGENICS OR LOW-YIELD STASIS. THIS REQUIRES A SUBTLE TOUCH, STARK.
MAKE SURE--
NATHANIEL, ALL WE'RE GOING TO NEED IS A FIRM CONNECTION.
YES, I'VE GOT IT, NIKOLA.
AND A BIT OF A SPARK.


IT'S WORKING.
It was the way things had always been. The Shield in the West, the Spear in the East...
The greater brotherhood, always divided.


Apart, both of these became corrupted. The West turned inward and for centuries devoured itself. The East flew apart, and as time passed, dissipated with each successive generation.
Except for the Last Caliphate, the three brothers of Causality.
They were hidden away at the height of the East for a tomorrow when they would be needed most.


Hidden away at the request of the Forever Man.

The Immortal City.
WELCOME BACK, BROTHERS.
THIS APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME A DARK AND DIRTY WORLD. I AM GOING TO GREET YOU NOW, FOREVER MAN.
HELLO, MICHELANGELO.
AFTER WE REUNITE, WE WILL TRAVEL TO THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY-- TO SAVE THE WORLD OR WATCH IT BURN I CANNOT SAY.
IT LIES BEYOND MY SIGHT.
THEY ARE THE EMBODIMENT OF BRANCHING TIME, LEONID. WHAT IS, WHAT HAS COME BEFORE, AND WHAT WILL BE.
HUH.
WE ARE ALL HERE. IT'S TIME.
THE HUMAN MACHINE.
TAKE YOUR POSITIONS.

The Engine.
The Navigator.
The Source.
The Conduit.
The Mechanism.
The Path.

The Anchor.
WHEN YOU ARE READY, LEONID.
The Sacrifice. The man left behind.
The BUILDER.
SUCCESS... GLORY...AND HOPEFULLY BOTH.
FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS.

2060. The Rebirth of Man.
BA-BA-DUURRRMMP!
MY GOD...
THIS... THIS...CAN'T BE.
THE REBIRTH. THE BEGINNING OF ALL THAT CAN BE. THE BROKEN LOOP. THE ETERNAL PROMISE.
THIS IS HOW THE WORLD BEGINS.
PARADISE... BUT ALL KNOWLEDGE LOST, HOW?
THERE!
I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE NEARBY. THERE ARE HEAT SIGNATURES IN THE FOREST, BUT THEY ARE KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE.
THE MACHINE LED US HERE. SO *THIS* IS WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
EVERYTHING LOOKS...
...PEACEFUL.
ZZZZAKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. PROPHET.
THE MAN WHO REMADE THE WORLD.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

2060. The Height of Modernity.
BA-BA-DUURRRMMP!
MY GOD...
THIS... THIS...EVERYTHING I BELIEVED IT WOULD BE.
THE NEXT STEP. THE ARC OF ASCENDANCY. THE FEEDBACK LOOP. TOMORROW'S TOMORROW.
THIS IS HOW THE WORLD COULD BE.
A PARADISE... CENTURIES LOST, BUT MILLENNIA GAINED.
THERE!
I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE OF ITS KIND. IT IS THE ONLY DESIGN OF THIS TYPE IN SIGHT...
YES. THE MACHINE BROUGHT US HERE. *THIS* MUST BE WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
IT LOOKS...SO SMALL.
OH, COME ON...
...FOR FUTURE-LAND ARCHITECTURE, WHATEVER THAT IS, IT'S DOWN-RIGHT SAD.
ZZZZZAKKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. ANACHRONIST.
THE MAN WHO COULD NOT DEFEAT THE FUTURE.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

2060. The End of the World.
BA-BA-DUURRRMMP!
MY GOD...
THIS... THIS...CAN'T BE.
THE END. THE END OF ALL THAT WAS. THE CLOSED LOOP. THE ETERNAL PROMISE.
THIS IS HOW THE WORLD ENDS.
A WASTELAND... CENTURIES LOST, FOR WHAT?
THERE!
I'LL GO. STAY HERE.

IT APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY STRUCTURE NEARBY. THERE ARE SOME BUILDINGS 50 MILES IN THE DISTANCE...
NO. THE MACHINE LED US HERE. *THIS* IS WHERE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
IT LOOKS... QUESTIONABLE.
OH, COME ON...
...FOR AN END-TIMES APOCALYPSE, IT APPEARS DOWNRIGHT COZY.
ZZZZAKKKK!
FATHER!
NATHANIEL... ARM THE BROTHERS, PLEASE.

AH...OLD FRIENDS.
WELCOME.
WHO?
NEWTON. BETRAYER. APOSTATE.
THE MAN WHO IS GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD.
IS THIS IT...?
IS THIS THE FUTURE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

DO NOT FEAR FOREVER...
...IT'S RIGHT HERE-- NOW--WITHIN YOUR GRASP!

And as battle rages all around him and across all possible futures...
...the Forever Man prepares the Human Machine...
...for his *final task*.

Chapter Eleven

“Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.”

2060. The Height of Modernity.
2060. The Rebirth of Man.
2060. The End of the World.

I AM HASAN IBN AL-HAYTHAM. FIRST OF THE THREE.
THE BROTHERS OF CAUSALITY.
THE LAST CALIPHATE...
HE IS HAMZA IBN AL-HAYTHAM. SECOND OF THE THREE.
THE BROTHERS OF CAUSALITY.
THE LAST CALIPHATE...
DOES THIS STRIKE YOU AS A BRUTE FORCE SCENARIO, HOWARD?
NO. IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT.
BUT WE HAVE TO TRY SOMETHING, DON'T WE?
HE WAS HAIDER IBN AL-HAYTHAM. LAST OF THE THREE.
THE BROTHERS OF CAUSALITY.
AT THIS DISTANCE, WE ARE SHEEP FOR OUR EVENTUAL SLAUGHTER.
WE HAVE TO GET CLOSER.
THE LAST CALIPHATE...

THE BROKEN SPEAR REUNITED WITH OUR BROTHERS THE SHIELD AT THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY.
NIKOLA!
THE BROKEN SPEAR REUNITED WITH THEIR BROTHERS THE SHIELD AT THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY.
I THINK I MIGHT HAVE AN IDEA.
THE BROKEN SPEAR REUNITED WITH THEIR BROTHERS THE SHIELD AT THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY.

TODAY, WE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE AND WE WILL PREVAIL.
HOWARD!
NO...
WE MUST...AS WE ARE ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN THE SURVIVAL OF MAN AND OUR EXTINCTION--THE DREAMS OF A MADMAN REALIZED.
TODAY, WE WAR.
NOW, THEY FIGHT FOR TODAY AND THE PROMISE OF TOMORROW IN THE FACE OF OBLIVION.
THEY STAND BETWEEN ALL THAT WAS AND THE ERASURE OF ALL HUMAN HISTORY.
IT IS A MADMAN'S DREAM MADE MANIFEST.
DON'T MOVE, NATHANIEL...
I'M PROBABLY ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS, AND THE DESIGN IS...
AMBITIOUS. YES, I KNOW, BUT...
...MAYBE INCLUDE A LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM IN YOUR DESIGN?
I KNEW I WAS FORGETTING SOMETHING.
THIS IS A PERFECT WAR.
IT WAS HERE THEY FOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE AND FAILED.
THEY STOOD FOR DECAYING IDEALS. LONG DEAD, AND COLLAPSING AT THE MOMENT OF THEIR BIRTH.
OH, GOD... MOM!
THERE ARE NO DREAMS, ONLY TEMPORARY RESPITES FROM INEVITABILITY.
THIS IS HOW THEY DIED...

AS WE BATTLED, THE WORDS OF NOSTRADAMUS RANG OUT.
AND THE MEANING WAS CLEAR.
BETWEEN THE GATES OF HEAVEN AND HELL...
WELL?
DEATH.
AND OVER THAT UNHOLY DIN, THE LAST PROPHECY OF NOSTRADAMUS ECHOED.
LOST IN A CIRCLING FOREVER THE FAITHFUL AND FAITHLESS MEET...
A FINAL WORD.
STEEL ON STEEL, BLOOD ON STONE...
WELL?
DEATH.
WITH THE VOICE OF NOSTRADAMUS IN THEIR EARS.
CRYING TO THE GREAT IMMORTAL, WHAT WILL YOU DO?
ONE LAST LIE FROM THE PROPHET.
WELL?
BETRAYAL.

AND THOUGH SOME MAY DIE, SO BE IT IF THAT ***SACRIFICE*** IS WHAT FATE DEMANDS.
I DO NOT FEAR DEATH, I FEAR DYING WITHOUT A PURPOSE.
I WILL NOT DIE IN VAIN.
EVEN AS HE RECOGNIZED THE UNAVOIDABLE, HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD FALL VICTIM TO THE SAME FATE AS OTHER MEN.
HE BELIEVED THAT THROUGH SOME FORCE OF WILL, SOME GREATER DESIRE...
THAT THE GREAT DARKNESS WOULD NOT TOUCH HIM.
THERE WOULD BE NO GLORIOUS ***END*** TO THIS.
?–
ONLY PAIN, AND LOSS, AND DEFEAT.

I WILL DIE FOR A *REASON*. FOR A GREATER CAUSE THAN THAT OF ONE MAN.
THERE IS NO FLAW IN A GOOD DEATH...
...AND I WILL DIE *WELL*.
ENOUGH, FATHER!
TURN AND FACE *ME!*
PERHAPS THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN TRUE, IF IN THE QUIET CORNER OF HIS MIND THE LITTLE DEATH *DOUBT* DID NOT RESIDE.
AND AS THE DARKNESS SWALLOWED HIM, HE KNEW HE WAS THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN DEMISE.
HE DIED POORLY AND FULL OF SHAME.
...BUT THEIR END WAS NOT *THE END*.
IS THAT REALLY ALL YOU'VE GOT?

LOOK, LEONID...
...SEE!
I AM HERE NOW.
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE...
I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE...
...PERFECTING THE GREAT HUMAN MACHINE.
I WILL BE FINISHED SOON, LEONID.
BE READY.

DAD...
DAD, WE HAVE TO BUY TIME FOR MICHELANGELO TO FINISH.
I'M SORRY.
GET BEHIND ME, LEONID.
THERE, THAT SHOULD DO IT.
A TIME DISPLACEMENT MACHINE OF MULTIVERSAL DESIGN.
IF WE CAN'T BEAT THEM...
WE DEAL WITH IT **ANOTHER** DAY.
OKAY, HOWARD...
...I'LL SEE YOU DOWN THE ROAD.
ALL RIGHT, KID...
...LET'S GO FOR A **RIDE.**
YOU HAVE TO GO NOW, LEONID.
BUT WHAT ABOUT--?
THIS TIMELINE IS **FLAWED.** BROKEN.
MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE MACHINE. WE WILL BUY YOU TIME.
AFTER ALL...
...TIME IS ALL WE HAVE.

I WANT YOU TO BE *STRONG,* SON...
...DO WHAT YOU KNOW IS RIGHT.
I *BELIEVE* IN YOU.
DAD?
DAAAAAAADD!
ONE OF THESE DAYS, THAT MAN IS GOING TO REACH HIS FILL OF TEMPORAL INSOLVENCY.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
DAMN.
AIIEEEE!
IS THIS NOT PERFECTION?
YOU DYING HERE AT THE END OF EVERYTHING.
BY MY PLANS...
BY MY HAND...

THIS COULD ONLY EVER END ONE WAY!
IT'S TIME.
IT'S TIME.
IT'S TIME.
YOU HAVE TO GO...
WHERE?
INSIDE. INTO THE MACHINE...

FOR ONE LAST JOURNEY...
NOOOOOOOO!!
ONE LAST *FIGHT...*

ONE LAST STEP..
...ACROSS THE *ABYSS*, AND INTO *TOMORROW*.

Chapter Twelve

"I Am the Sun"

The Human Machine.
OKAY... HERE WE GO.
NO INSTRUCTION MANUAL. NO CO-PILOT.
EXCEPT ME.
HOPEFULLY, I CAN--
OH, IT'S INTUITIVE, LIKE RIDING A...
ZZZNNNNNN!
SUCH FAILURE-- IT...
...FAILURE-- IT ECHOES ACROSS...
...ECHOES ACROSS ETERNITY.
NO. IT'S... IT'S MORE THAN THAT...
I CAN NO LONGER SEE THE FUTURE.
I'M BLIND FOR ALL TIME.

THE HEIGHT OF MODERNITY. THE REBIRTH OF MAN. THE END OF THE WORLD...
ALL OF THESE *POSSIBILITIES...*
ALL THE CHOICES IN *BETWEEN...*
I WANT THIS *MADNESS...*
...TO END!
NNNNNNNNNNNNN
NNNRRRRRRRRRR

There was *nothing.*
Followed by *everything.*
Swirling, burning specks of creation that circled life-giving suns.
I was *born* in the *light.*

The universe... *our mother*...
...holding me close in a cradle called a star.
It was a second birth...
...a second chance...

One with a single purpose.
NNNNNNNN
NRRRR
See! All possibilities collapse into an instant of pure potential!

Let man be judged, and the future of all things be decided!
YOU FOOL...
WHAT... IS...THIS?
WHAT IS THIS?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
PUT THE BLAME WHERE IT BELONGS, FATHER...
...NOT WITH MICHELANGELO...
...BUT WITH ME.

THE BOY YOU RAISED AS YOUR OWN.
NOW A MAN, REFINED AS YOU SAW FIT...
...THE SON OF ALL SONS.
YOURS.
FATHER, PLEASE...
...LET'S END THIS IN A WAY THAT EMBRACES WHO WE REALLY ARE.
CAN WE PLEASE TALK ABOUT DISCOVERY AND LEAVE BEHIND ALL THIS INFATUATION WITH ANNIHILATION?

INFATUATION? LIKE IT'S SOME SPRING DALLIANCE AND NOT OUR INESCAPABLE DESTINY?
BOY...ONE CANNOT AVOID FATE.
ESPECIALLY ONE'S OWN!
NO!
NO!
ZZZAKKKKKKTT!!

I'M NOT TRYING TO AVOID ANYTHING...
...I'M TRYING TO SAVE EVERYTHING.
I'M TRYING TO SAVE YOU.
WON'T YOU PLEASE LET ME?
WHY NOT GIVE THE BOY A CHANCE, ISAAC?
THE THING ABOUT FATE AND FINALITY-- IT'S NOT UP FOR DISCUSSION.
THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT...SO I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.
WELL, THEN...
...UNLESS YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND, YOUR PERSPECTIVE...OR HAVE THOSE THINGS CHANGED FOR YOU...

...I GUESS YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO *LISTEN.*
HRRGGHHHH!
PUH... PUH...PERHAPS A SMALL CHAT ISN'T COMPLETELY OUT OF ORDER...
EXCELLENT, FATHER. THANK YOU.

NOW THAT WE'VE LEFT BEHIND MANKIND'S NORMAL, PREDICTABLE AVENUE OF VIOLENCE...
...TELL ME, WHAT DID THE MACHINE *DO TO YOU,* LEONID?
YES. IF I MUST GO DOWN THIS PATH-- IF I AM BEHOLDEN TO SOME OTHERWORLDLY POWER...
...THEN I PREFER TO--AT THE VERY LEAST-- UNDERSTAND IT.
THE HUMAN MACHINE HAS ONE PURPOSE...EXPLORING POTENTIAL.
YOU UNDERSTAND THIS, OF COURSE...
"...IT'S YOUR HISTORY...
"...IT'S *ALL* OUR HISTORY.

"IT BEGAN AS ALL LIFE DOES. RANDOM. CHAOTIC.
"AND SIMPLE.
"THEN, THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL CATALYSTS...
"...OR BY NATURAL AND UNNATURAL STIMULI, THINGS EVOLVE.
"THEY BECOME MORE.
"SOME SPECIES, UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF THEIR EVOLUTIONARY BETTERS--
"--CALL THEM GODS WIELDING ***MAGIC*** IF YOU WANT...
"...CALL THEM ALIENS WIELDING ***SCIENCE*** IF THAT SUITS YOU BETTER--
"--DARE TO REMAKE THEMSELVES IN THEIR MAKER'S IMAGE...
"...AND EVENTUALLY SEIZE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN FUTURE...
"...GRABBING ON TIGHT WITH BOTH HANDS."

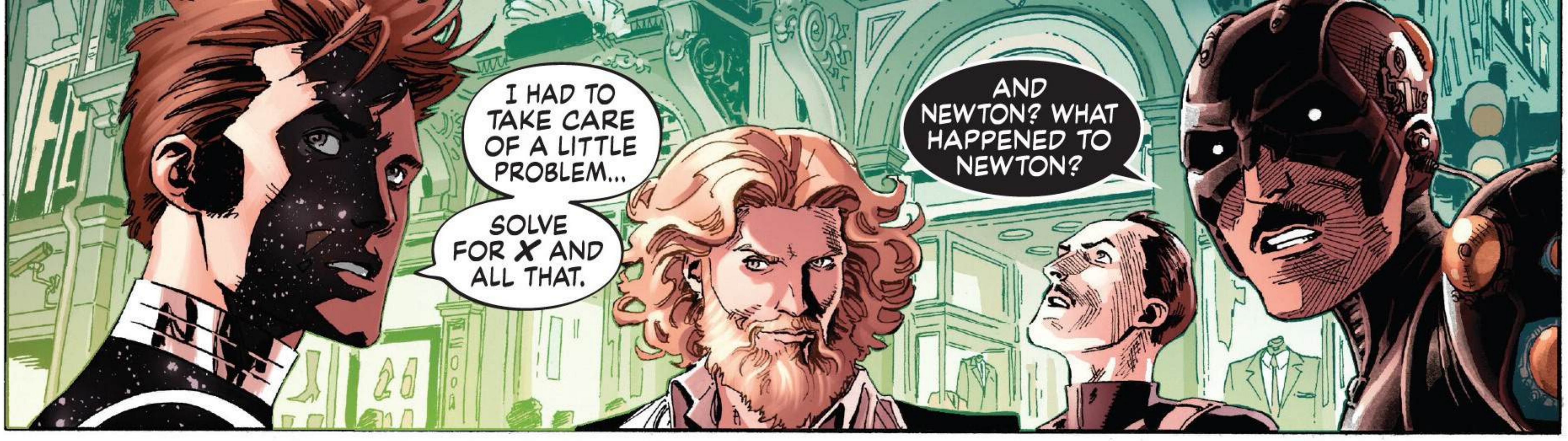
THEY WILL THEMSELVES OVER LAND, ACROSS SEA, THROUGH THE AIR AND SPACE BEYOND...
...UNTIL THEY FIND THEMSELVES HERE...
...WITH ONE QUESTION ON THEIR LIPS.
WHAT NOW?
YOU BOTH KNOW WHAT NOW.
A PERSON IS BORN AND MEANT TO BE A CERTAIN THING. THEY DO THAT AND THEN IT ENDS.
THE SAME IS TRUE FOR AN ENTIRE SPECIES.
YES, FATHER. I UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION.
AND MICHELANGELO REPRESENTS THE OPPOSITE--POSSIBILITY. RANDOMNESS, FREE WILL, AND ALL OF THAT--WHICH IS WHY BOTH OF YOU ARE HERE...
...IN YOUR MOST PERFECTED STATES.
THE TRUE EMBODIMENT OF THOSE TWO COMPETING IDEAS...
WHILE I HAVE BECOME THE FULL MEASURE OF MAN--THE PURE POTENTIAL OF THE HUMAN MACHINE.
AS SUCH, I BELIEVE I HAVE A SOLUTION TO OUR DUALITY PROBLEM.

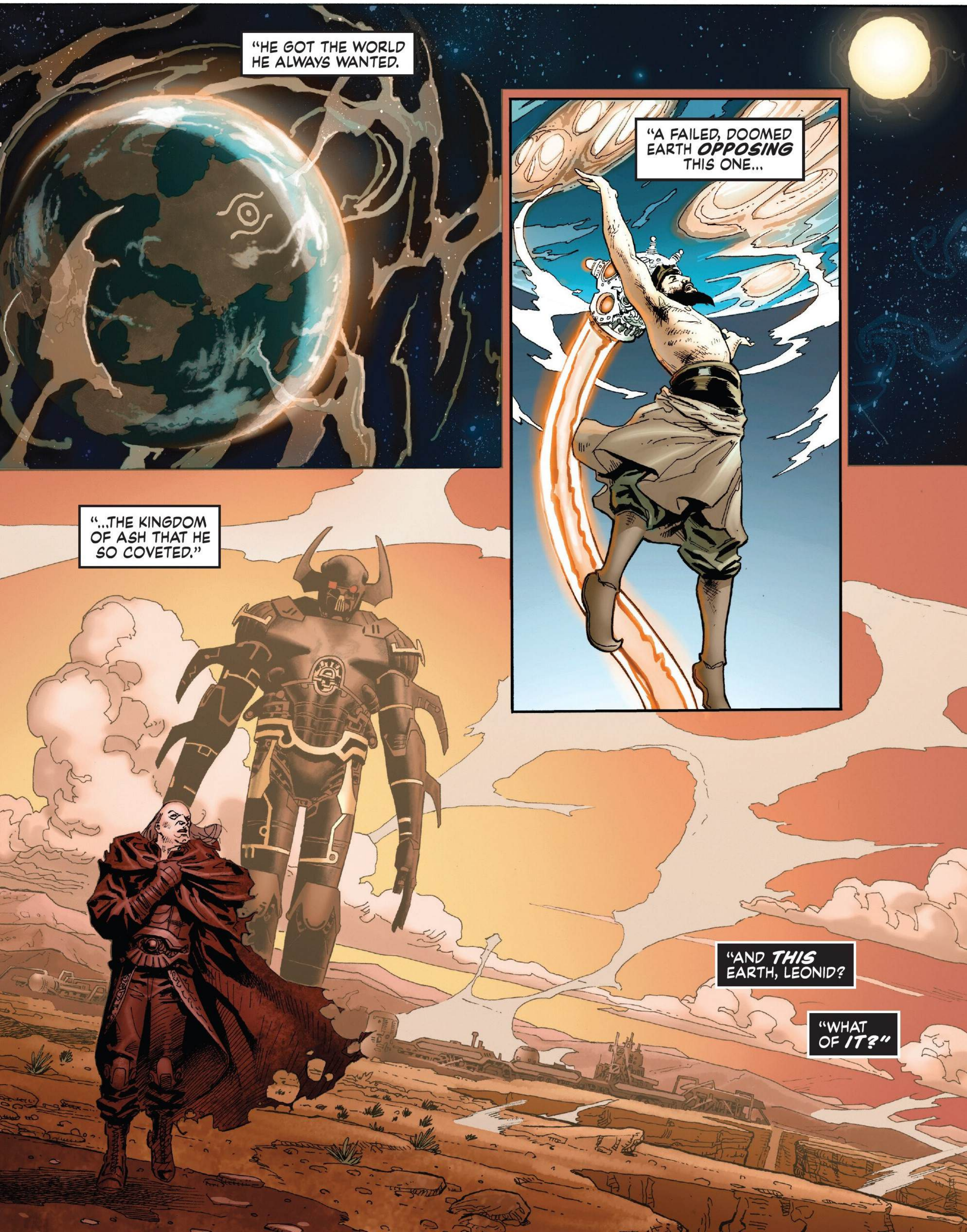
WHAT IF I COULD GIVE YOU BOTH--
--EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT?
"COLLAPSING TIME--AS I HAVE--INTO A SINGLE *FOREVER MOMENT,* SO THAT YOU COULD SEE THE UNIVERSE AS GODS DO.
"WHERE THERE IS NO SEPARATION BETWEEN FATE AND FREE WILL...
"WHERE ALL OF MAN'S CHOICES WERE OF HIS OWN MAKING, AND THE RESULT OF THOSE CHOICES IS A DESTINY THAT HE WAS ALWAYS GOING TO ACHIEVE.
"IF I COULD GIVE YOU BOTH, WOULD YOU *TAKE* IT?"
FATHER?
YES.
THAT'S ALL I'VE EVER WANTED.
MICHELANGELO?
YES, I BELIEVE I WOULD...

TIME, LOOPING AROUND ON ITSELF...
...CONSTANTLY REWRITING ***ALL THAT WAS*** AND ***IS*** TO SERVE NOT A SINGULAR, CONSTANT TRUTH, BUT A GREATER UNIVERSAL ONE...
...AN EVOLVING HISTORY...
...A ***UNIFIED*** HISTORY.

TRUTH AS WE MAKE IT.
"TRUTH AS IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE.
"YES.
"I WOULD CHOOSE THIS GIFT, LEONID.
"YES, I WOULD TAKE IT."
KKHHRSSHH!
WE'VE STOPPED.

WHERE ARE WE?
HELL, *WHEN* ARE WE?
CH-THUNKK
I CAN ANSWER THAT.
WELCOME... TO A *BETTER* TOMORROW.
ITALIA
PRADA
PRADA
DELIZIOSO
Pasticceria
AMADEUS
GAP
87
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
NOW.


I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF A LITTLE PROBLEM...
SOLVE FOR X AND ALL THAT.
AND NEWTON? WHAT HAPPENED TO NEWTON?


"HE GOT THE WORLD HE ALWAYS WANTED.
"A FAILED, DOOMED EARTH OPPOSING THIS ONE...
"...THE KINGDOM OF ASH THAT HE SO COVETED."
"AND THIS EARTH, LEONID?
"WHAT OF IT?"

Epilogue.
My dearest Anthony,
This machine contains a full record of all the things I believe to matter.
A codex of what little wisdom I have.
I leave it all to you in the hopes that it will both inform and inspire you to be something better than the man I was, and eventually, the man I became.
I want you to understand that this is a simple world made complex by the most mediocre of men.
IF I LEAVE YOU WITH ONE THING...IF THERE IS ONE SINGLE THOUGHT THAT YOU SHOULD CARRY WITH YOU FOR ALL YOUR LIFE, LET IT BE THIS:
SEE THINGS CLEARLY.
You must be able to recognize what this world is lacking--diagnose it--and then find an elegant solution to make it better.
My dearest Ant

AND HOW DO YOU DO THAT, YOU MIGHT ASK?
IT'S EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK. CLEAR YOUR MIND OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE...
...AND THEN VISUALIZE HOW TO FIX IT--TRULY SEE IT WITH YOUR MIND'S EYE.
See it, son.
Just close your eyes and SEE it...then you'll know...
Everything begins with an IDEA.
Everything begins with an IMAGE.
And when you have that...
...YOU BUILD.

Chapter Thirteen

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zachary**BALDUS** (chapter 2),
kevin**MELLON** (chapter 3) &
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& gabriel**HERNANDEZ WALTA** (chapter 4)
Letterer: todd**KLEIN**
Associate Editor: daniel**KETCHUM**
Editor: nick**LOWE**

1: COLOSSUS

Florence, 1497.
WELL?
WE HAVE FAILED, MASTER.
THE MAN WILL NOT LISTEN TO REASON...
...I SAY THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME. HE LACKS THE VISION TO BE ONE OF THE BROTHERHOOD.
OH, I THINK YOU'RE VERY WRONG THERE, PIETRO... PERHAPS YOUNG MICHAELANGELO SIMPLY HAS INTERESTS THAT DIVERGE FROM OUR OWN.
PERHAPS ONE DAY I WILL CALL ON HIM MYSELF AND STATE THE CASE... *MORE CLEARLY.*
REGARDLESS, FOR NOW, PLEASE MONITOR MY EXPERIMENTS WHILE I AM ABSENT.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MASTER?
TO FILL YOUNG MINDS WITH WONDER, LORENZO...
IT'S TIME FOR CLASS.

SO...WHO WANTS TO HEAR A STORY?

VERY WELL...
WHO CAN TELL ME WHO ARCHIMEDES WAS?

YOU.
HE WAS BORN IN 287 B.C., AND DIED DURING THE SIEGE OF SYRACUSE.
MAJOR FIELDS OF INTEREST WERE PHYSICS, MATHEMATICS, AND ASTRONOMY, BUT WE ALSO KNOW THAT HIS GREATEST TALENT WAS IN ENGINEERING.
YES, THOSE ARE THE FACTS, BUT WHO WAS HE?
HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE IMMORTAL BROTHERHOOD AND HELD THE SHIELD AND THE WEST.
HE WAS, LIKE YOU, A MASTER... AND THE GREATEST OF A GENERATION.
YES, YES...
...BUT WHO ***WAS HE?***

Rhodes, 226 B.C.
HURRY, WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME!
HERE, MASTER ARCHIMEDES... IT IS READY!
YOU **MUST** PREVAIL...
"...OR OUR GREAT CITY WILL ***FALL*** TO THE ALIEN MACHINE!"
THEN IT IS GOOD THAT WE HAVE OUR ***OWN.***

RRRRARRR!!

CRASHHH!
NO...

NO!
SMMAAASSHHH!

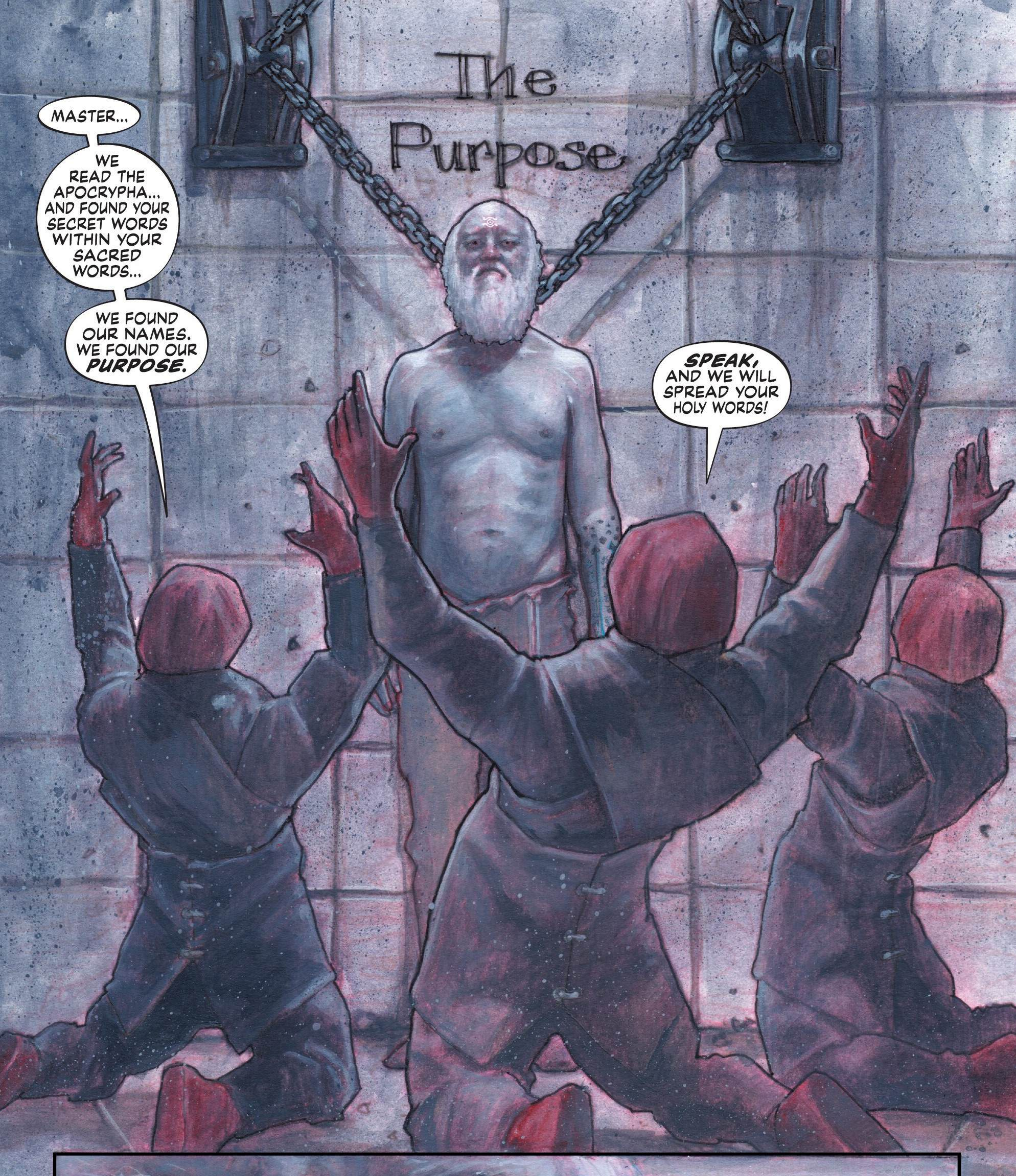
"SO, ARCHIMEDES..."
YES, HE WAS A GREAT MAN. YES, HE WAS OUR BROTHER...*YES,* HE DID MANY GREAT THINGS...
...BUT WHO *WAS* HE?
WHO HE HAD TO BE.
WHO WE NEEDED HIM TO BE.
HE HELD EVERYTHING TOGETHER.
HE STOOD IN THE GAP.
AND ONE DAY SO WILL YOU.
THE END OF CHAPTER ONE

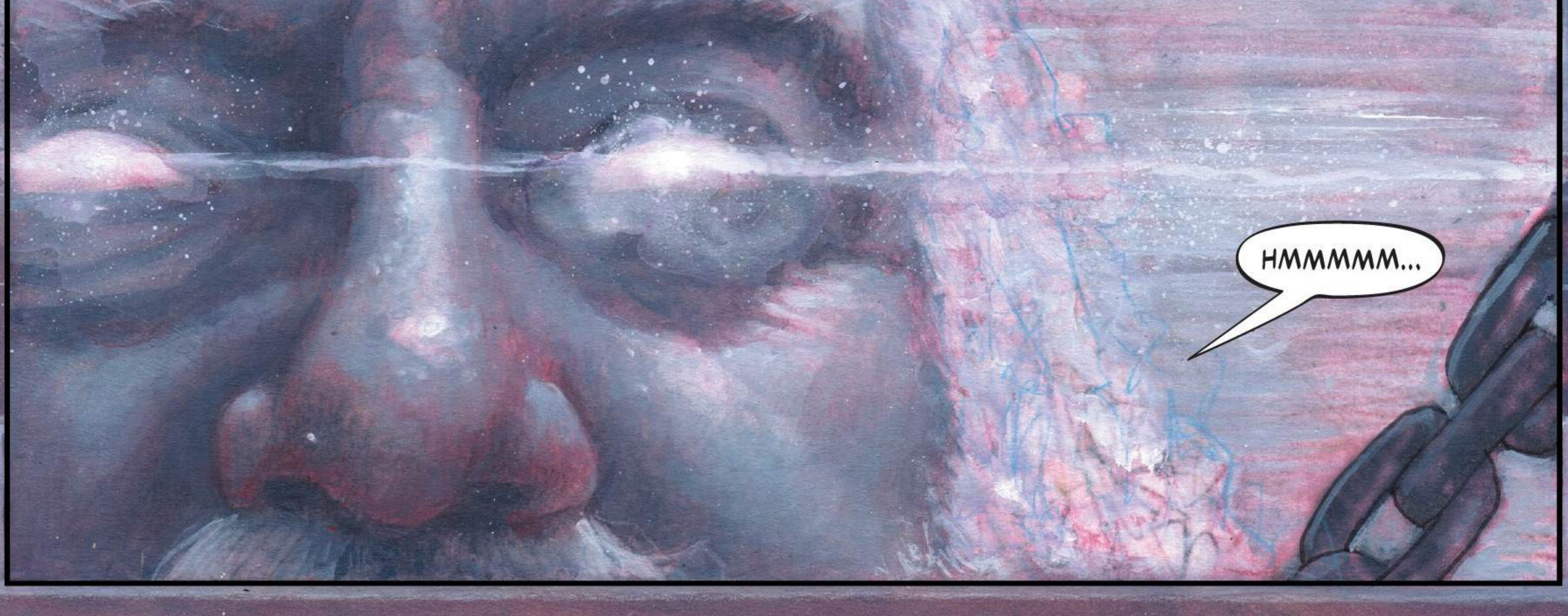
2: THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

Rome, 1806.
THE CODE LIES WITHIN THE TEXT.
THE KEY LIES WITHIN THE CODE.
IT'S ALL HERE.
THE WAY IN, THE PURPOSE, THE WAY OUT... *THE TIME...THE DESTINATION...*
DO WE DARE GO?
HOW CAN WE NOT?
KNOWING ALL THIS I FEEL COMPELLED...
POP
WE *MUST* GO INTO THE CITY.

shhhhhhhh
shhhhhhh
snk-t
The Way In
Pfflooooof
shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

THROUGH HERE...
...AND NOW BELOW.
WHUUUUMP


The Purpose
MASTER...
WE READ THE APOCRYPHA... AND FOUND YOUR SECRET WORDS WITHIN YOUR SACRED WORDS...
WE FOUND OUR NAMES. WE FOUND OUR *PURPOSE.*
SPEAK, AND WE WILL SPREAD YOUR HOLY WORDS!


HMMMMM...

Later.
The Way Out
ARRGHHHH!
Thoonk
QUICKLY! THIS WAY!
UURRKK!
Thok
Thok
Thok
TiK
TiK
TiK
OOOFFF!
Thok
Thok

WELL?
YOU HAVE A WORD FOR ME?
The Destination
H-H-H-HE...
HE SAID...
HE SAID...HE *PERSEVERES.*
THE END OF CHAPTER TWO

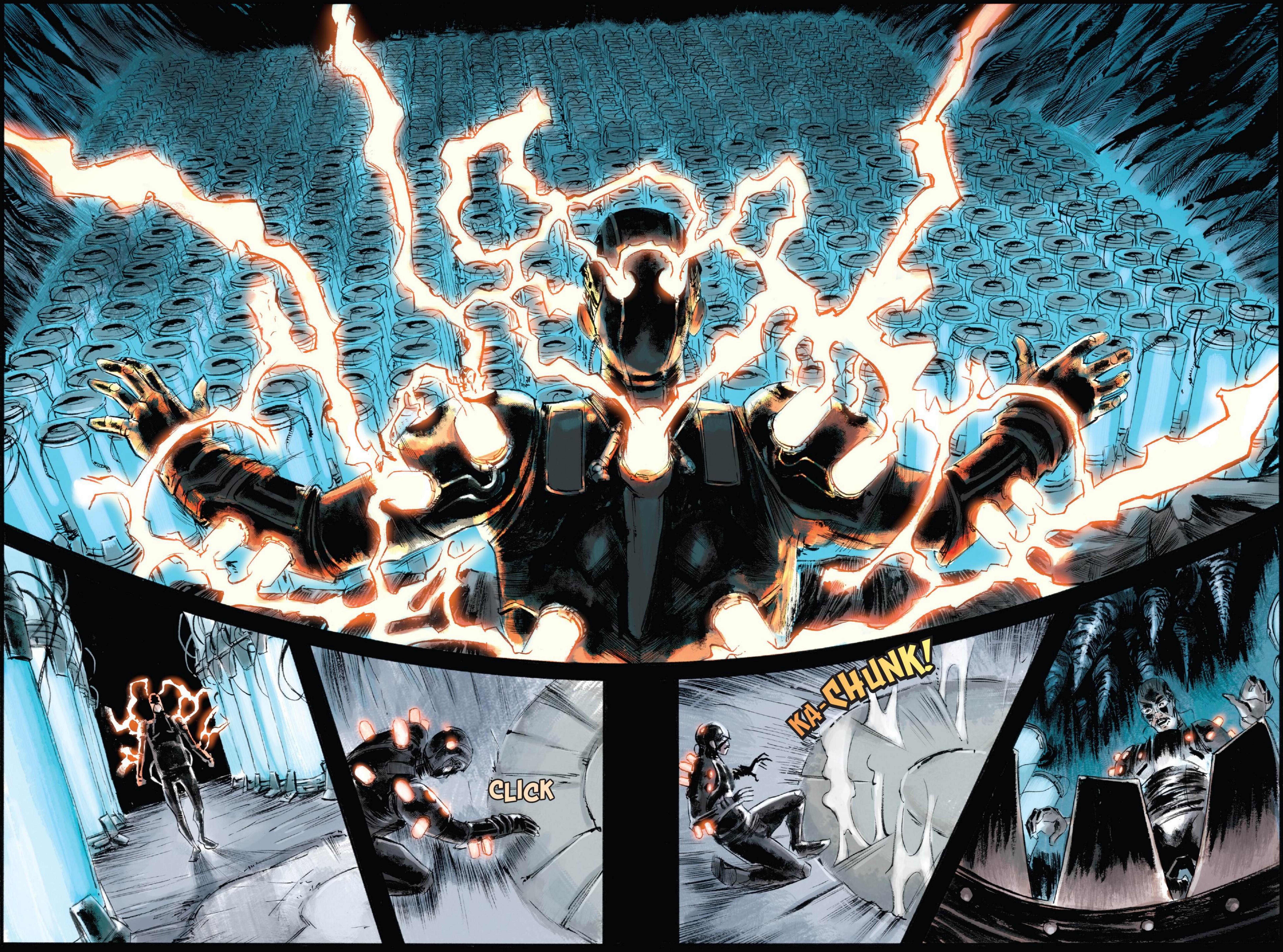
3: LIFE, THE END OF THE WORLD, AND THE KEY

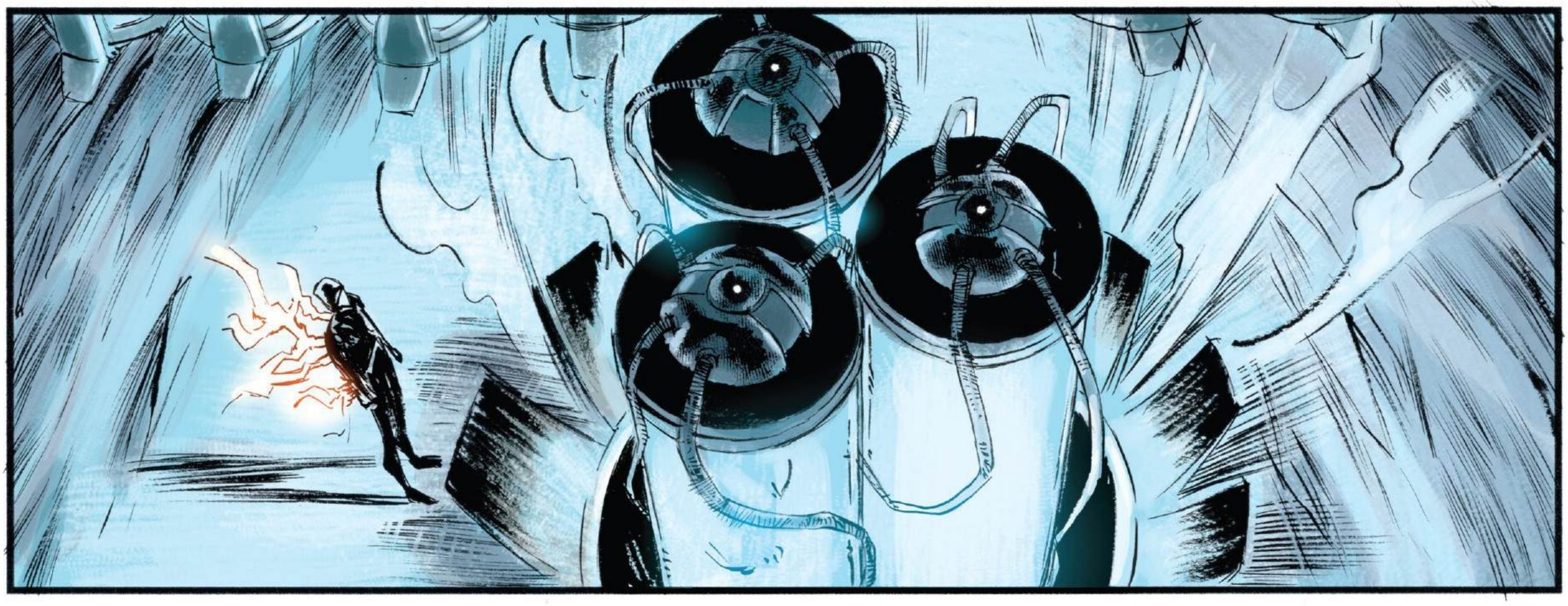
ARRRGGGHHHH!
YES... ...DEATH HURTS.
BEING BROUGHT BACK, EVEN MORE SO... ...BUT THE LIVING IS WORTH IT, NO?
SO STOP YOUR SCREAMING, NIKOLA...

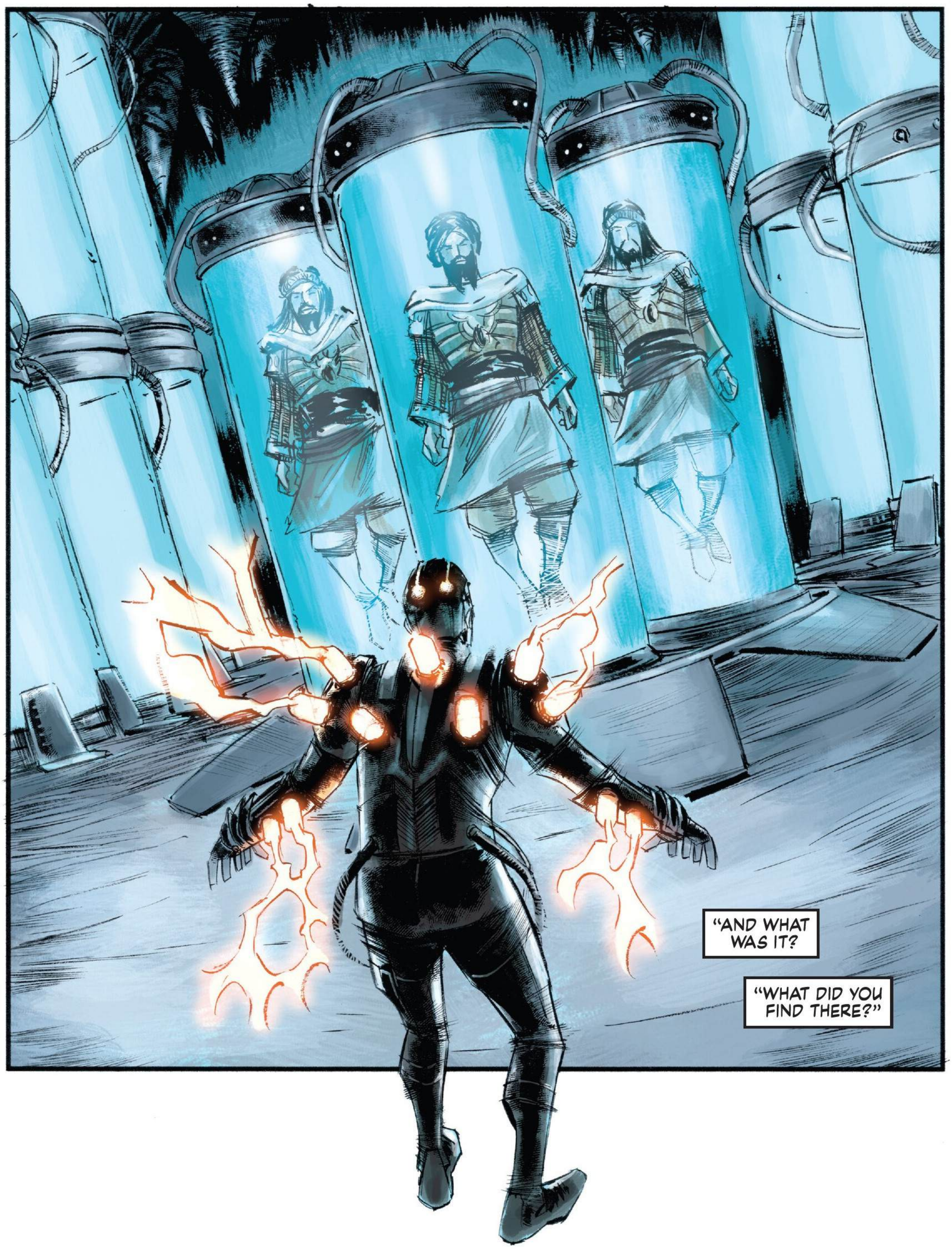
...AND BREATHE A SWEET BREATH AS ONE OF THE *REBORN.*
CLICK
THIS IS NOT...
SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT.
YOU ARE THE SUIT, NOW... THE SUIT IS YOU.
THIS MEANS FULL CONTROL OF THE MECHANISM...
...YOU HAVE BECOME *THE MACHINE.*
WHY?
WHY DID YOU *SAVE* ME? WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO ME?
OUT IN THE WORLD, TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR MAN. SOON, SIDES WILL BE DRAWN...SOON, ALL LINES OF POSSIBLE ACTION WILL CONVERGE TO A SINGLE POINT...
...AND AT THAT MARK STANDS YOUR SON.
SO, *WHY,* NIKOLA?
BECAUSE I NEED YOU. BECAUSE *HE* NEEDS YOU.

Later. Rome.
HE SAID THERE WERE TWO THINGS I HAD TO DO.
OH...?
AND WHAT WERE THEY?
THE FIRST WAS A JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE WORLD.
TO SEARCH OUT A SECRET CHAMBER WITHIN A SECRET CHAMBER...
...TO UNCOVER SOMETHING HIDDEN AND LONG FORGOTTEN.
AND WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT DID YOU FIND THERE?

The Zargos Mountains.
MY GOD.


CLICK
KA-CHUNK!




"AND WHAT WAS IT?
"WHAT DID YOU FIND THERE?"

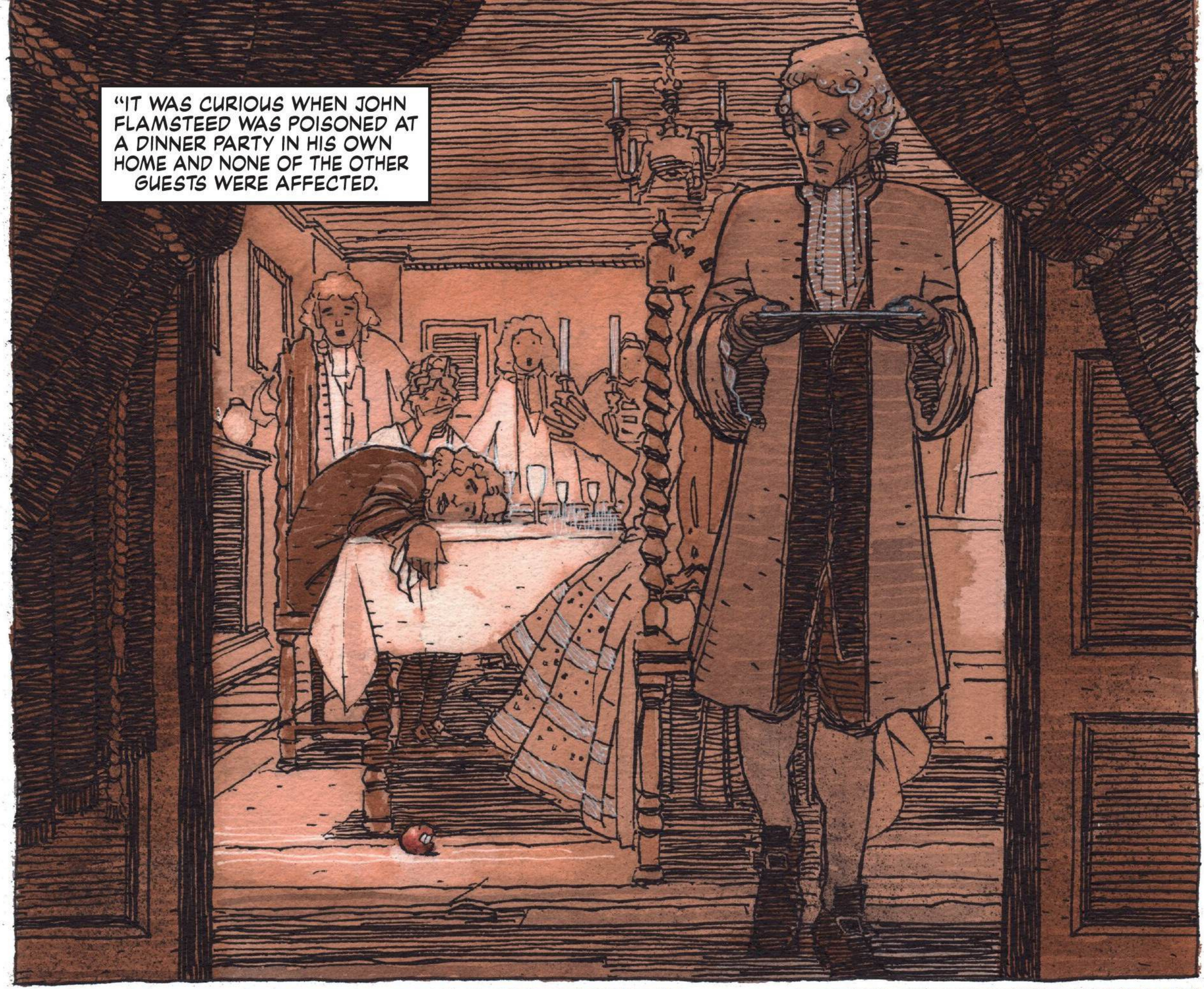
WHAT IS, WHAT HAS COME BEFORE, AND WHAT WILL BE...
I FOUND THOSE WHO MARK *THE WAY.*
AND NOW, THEY SLOWLY WAKE FROM CENTURIES OF SLEEP.
AND THE OTHER?
THE OTHER...
THE OTHER HE SAID YOU WOULD KNOW.
HE SAID YOU HAD KEPT IT SECRET.
IT IS FINALLY TIME.
WHAT IS IT?
IT IS THE KEY TO UNLOCK A DOOR THAT CANNOT BE OPENED.
AND IT IS THE FIRST STEP ON A PATH THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED BY A VERY SPECIAL PERSON.
THAT DOOR IS LOCATED IN THE IMMORTAL CITY.
AND THAT PERSON IS OUR *SON.*
THE END OF CHAPTER THREE

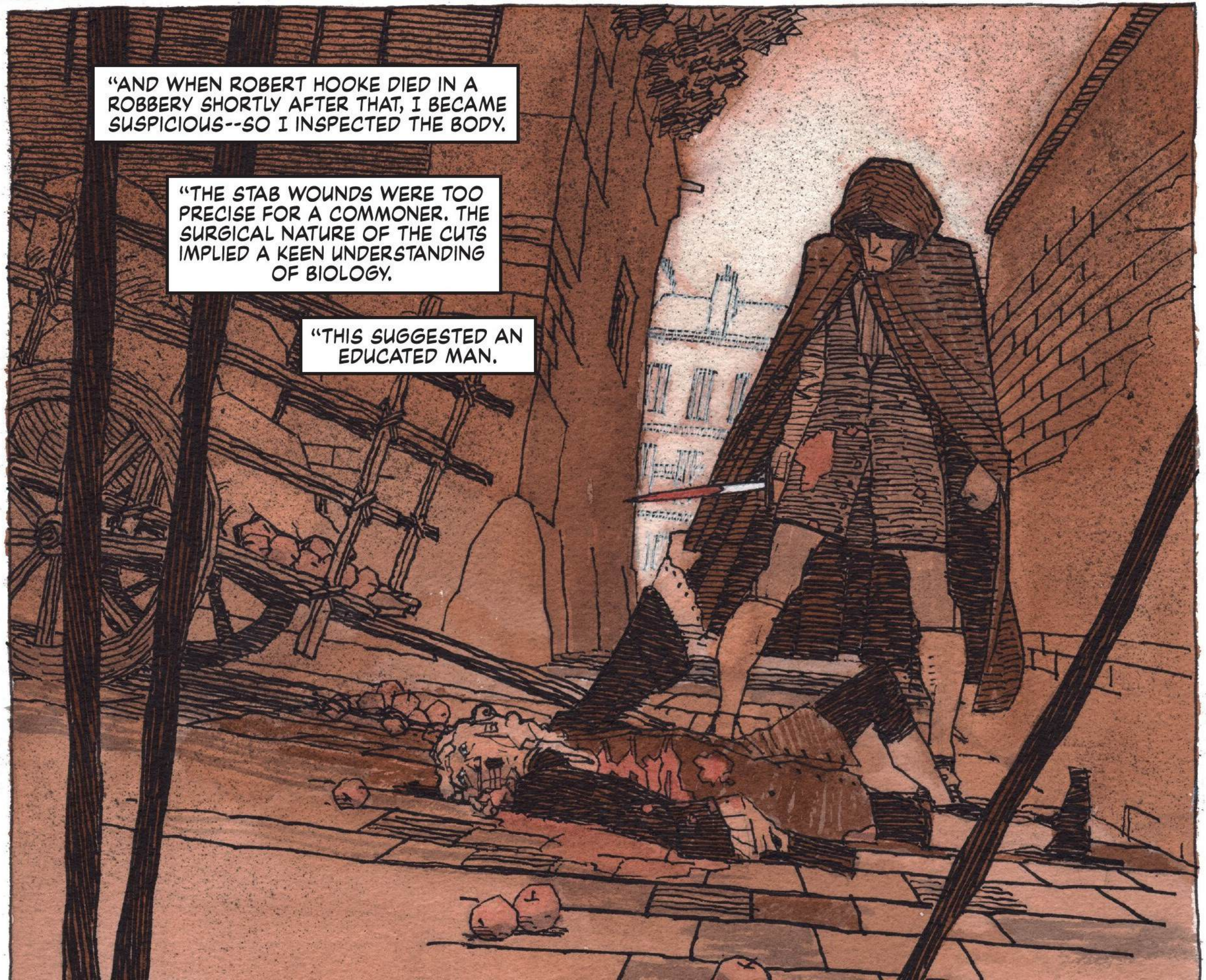
4: The Apple

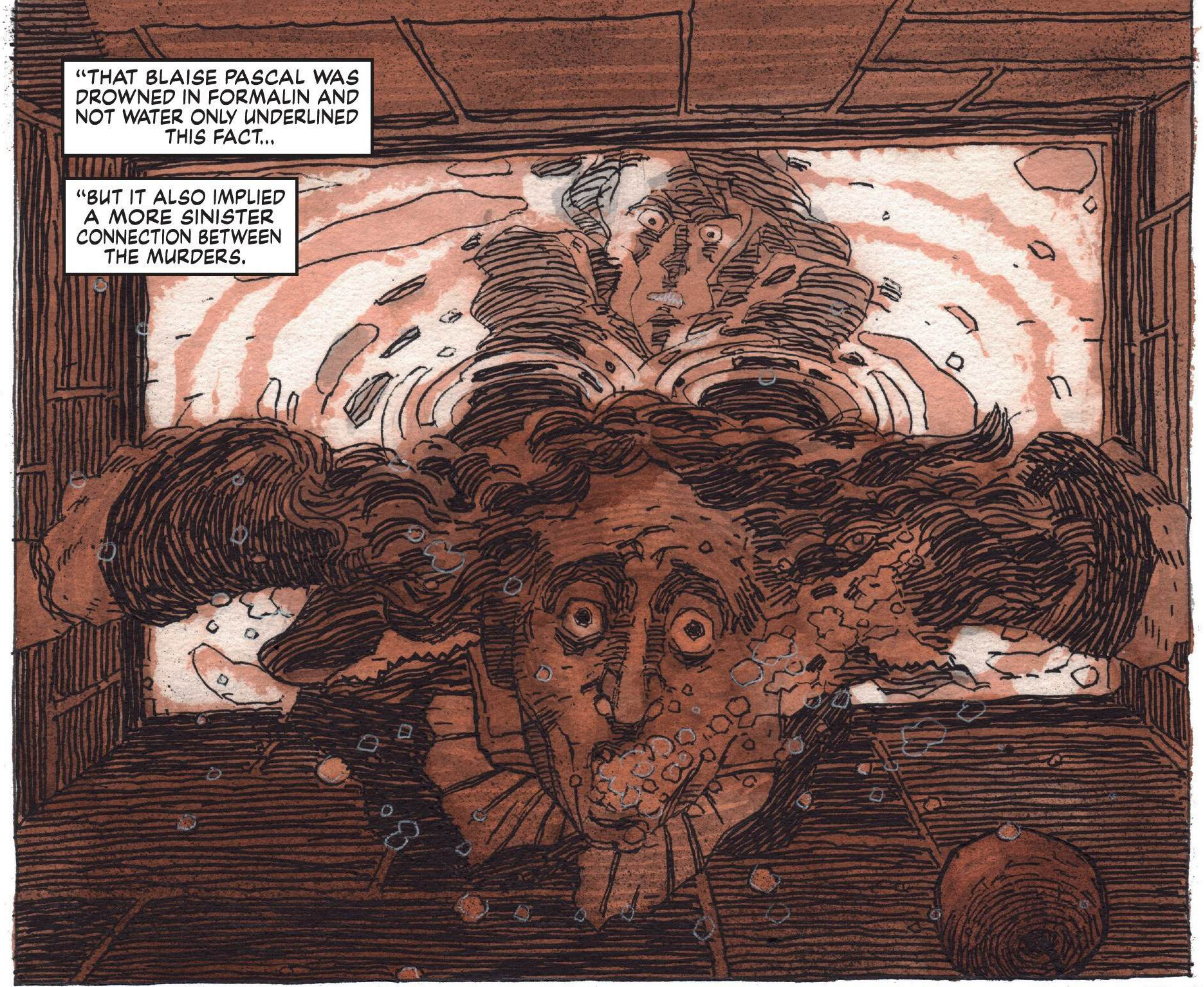
The Immortal City.
SOLAR ✩ SYSTEM

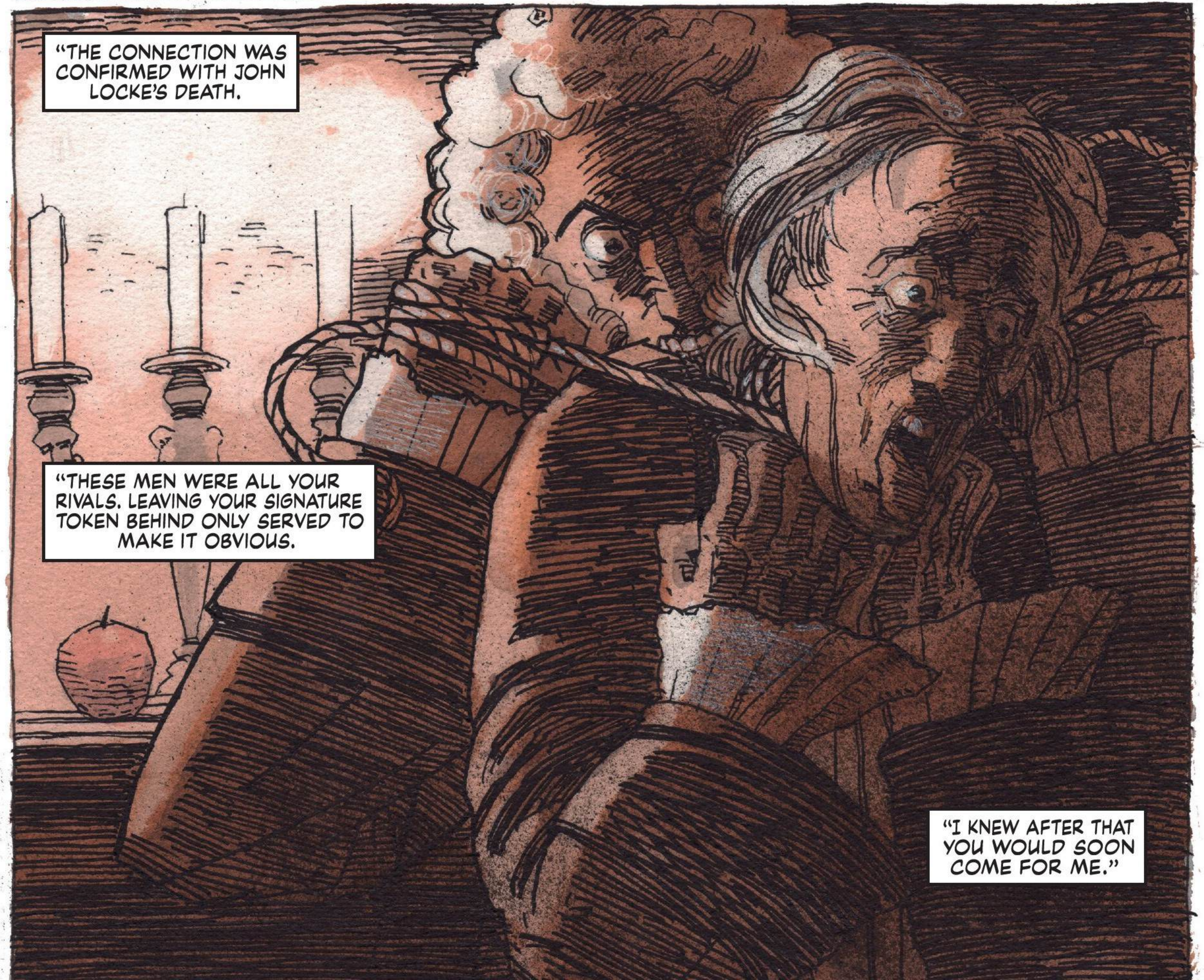
Hannover, 1707.
I KNOW YOU'RE IN HERE, ISAAC.

IT'S BEEN QUITE SOME TIME, GOTTFRIED.
AND YOU'VE BEEN VERY BUSY.
HAVE I NOW?
I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING.
OH, REALLY, HERR LEIBNIZ...
TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT YOU THINK HAS BEEN HAPPENING.


"IT WAS CURIOUS WHEN JOHN FLAMSTEED WAS POISONED AT A DINNER PARTY IN HIS OWN HOME AND NONE OF THE OTHER GUESTS WERE AFFECTED.


"AND WHEN ROBERT HOOKE DIED IN A ROBBERY SHORTLY AFTER THAT, I BECAME SUSPICIOUS--SO I INSPECTED THE BODY.
"THE STAB WOUNDS WERE TOO PRECISE FOR A COMMONER. THE SURGICAL NATURE OF THE CUTS IMPLIED A KEEN UNDERSTANDING OF BIOLOGY.
"THIS SUGGESTED AN EDUCATED MAN.


"THAT BLAISE PASCAL WAS DROWNED IN FORMALIN AND NOT WATER ONLY UNDERLINED THIS FACT...
"BUT IT ALSO IMPLIED A MORE SINISTER CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MURDERS.


"THE CONNECTION WAS CONFIRMED WITH JOHN LOCKE'S DEATH.
"THESE MEN WERE ALL YOUR RIVALS. LEAVING YOUR SIGNATURE TOKEN BEHIND ONLY SERVED TO MAKE IT OBVIOUS.
"I KNEW AFTER THAT YOU WOULD SOON COME FOR ME."

AND NOW, HERE YOU ARE.
WHY DON'T YOU RUN?
I HAD TO **KNOW...**
I HEAR WHISPERS ABOUT SECRET SOCIETIES, A BROTHERHOOD OF SCIENCE DEDICATED TO BETTERING THE WORLD...YOUR POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN IT...
THESE THINGS YOU SPEAK OF--IF THEY EVEN EXIST--WOULD LIE BEYOND YOUR ABILITY TO COMPREHEND, GOTTFRIED.
DO NOT PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND MY MOTIVATIONS.
YOU MISUNDERSTAND, I SIMPLY WANTED TO KNOW IF YOU HAD AN EXCUSE FOR THE DICHOTOMY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN YOUR CALLING AND YOUR ACTIONS OR IF THAT IS SIMPLY HOW YOU SHOULD BE DEFINED.
TELL ME, ISAAC...DO YOU REALLY CONSIDER YOUR HYPOCRISY ENLIGHTENMENT?
WELL... GET **ON** WITH IT.

RRRARRRRR!
PHILOSOPHIÆ NATURALIS PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA
WHAM!
WHAM!
WHAM!

THE END OF
CHAPTER FOUR

Cover Gallery

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **1**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **2**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **3**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **4**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **6**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) **2**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) **4**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) **6**

∞
INFINITUM
sanctum
purificati
excoctum numine
purificati
excoctum numine
2011

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #1 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER

LEONARDO DA VINCI

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #1 black & white variant by
dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **#2 variant by dustin**WEAVER **& christina**STRAIN

NOSTRADAMUS

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **#2** 3rd-printing variant by
dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #3 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER
THANKS, MAX ERNST

ISAAC NEWTON

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) **#4 variant by dustinWEAVER & christinaSTRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER
ZHANG HENG

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #5 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER

HOWARD STARK & NATHANIEL RICHARDS

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #6 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

NIKOLA TESLA
DUSTIN WEAVER christina

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) #1 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & christina**STRAIN**

DUSTIN WEAVER
MICHELANGELO

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) #2 variant by dustin**WEAVER** & sonia**OBACK**

1961
THE STAR CHILD

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) #3 variant by dustinWEAVER & soniaOBACK

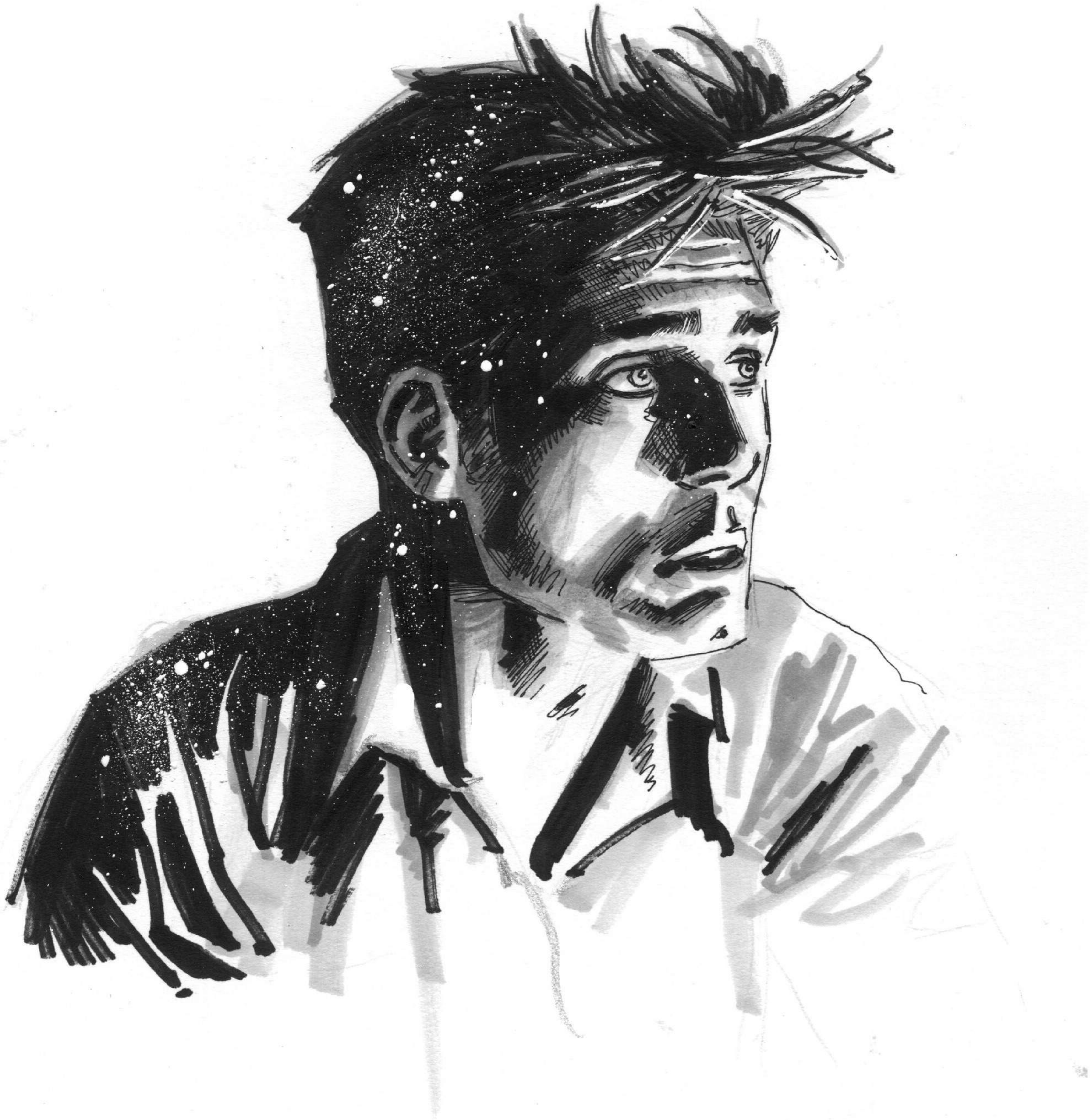
S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) ∞ variant by dustinWEAVER & christinaSTRAIN

DUSTIN WEAVER

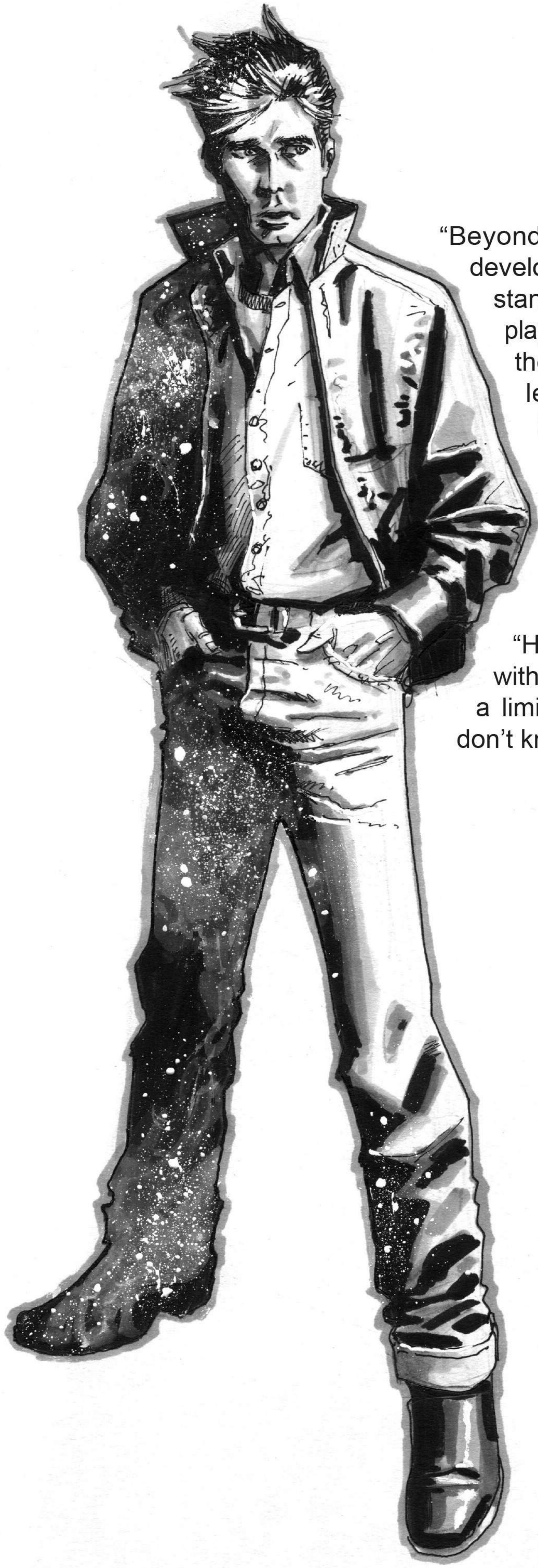
S.H.I.E.L.D. *(2010) #6* **variant by mikeMAYHEW**

S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #1 promotional image by marko**DJURDJEVIĆ**

Sketchbook



Leonid

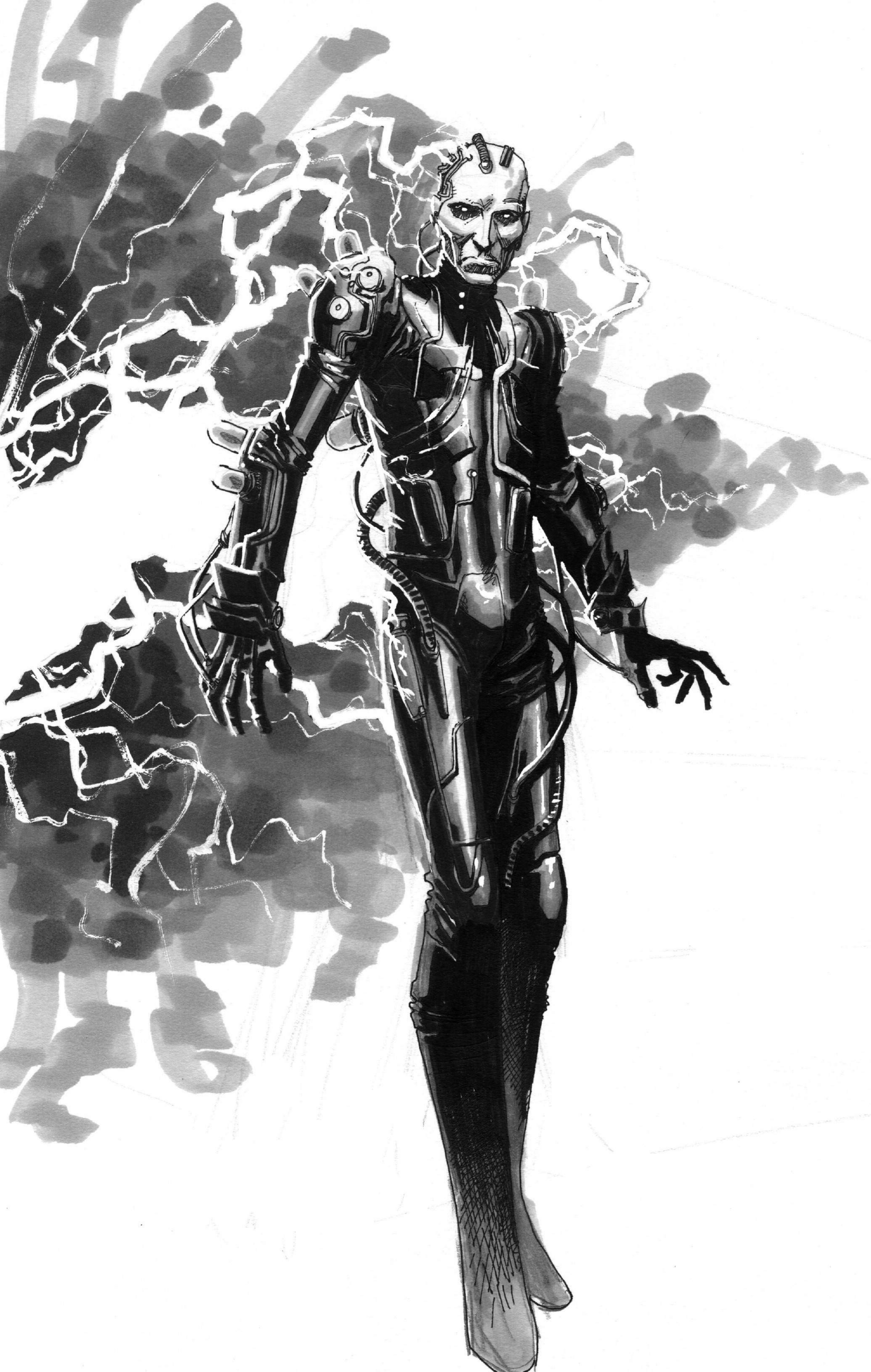


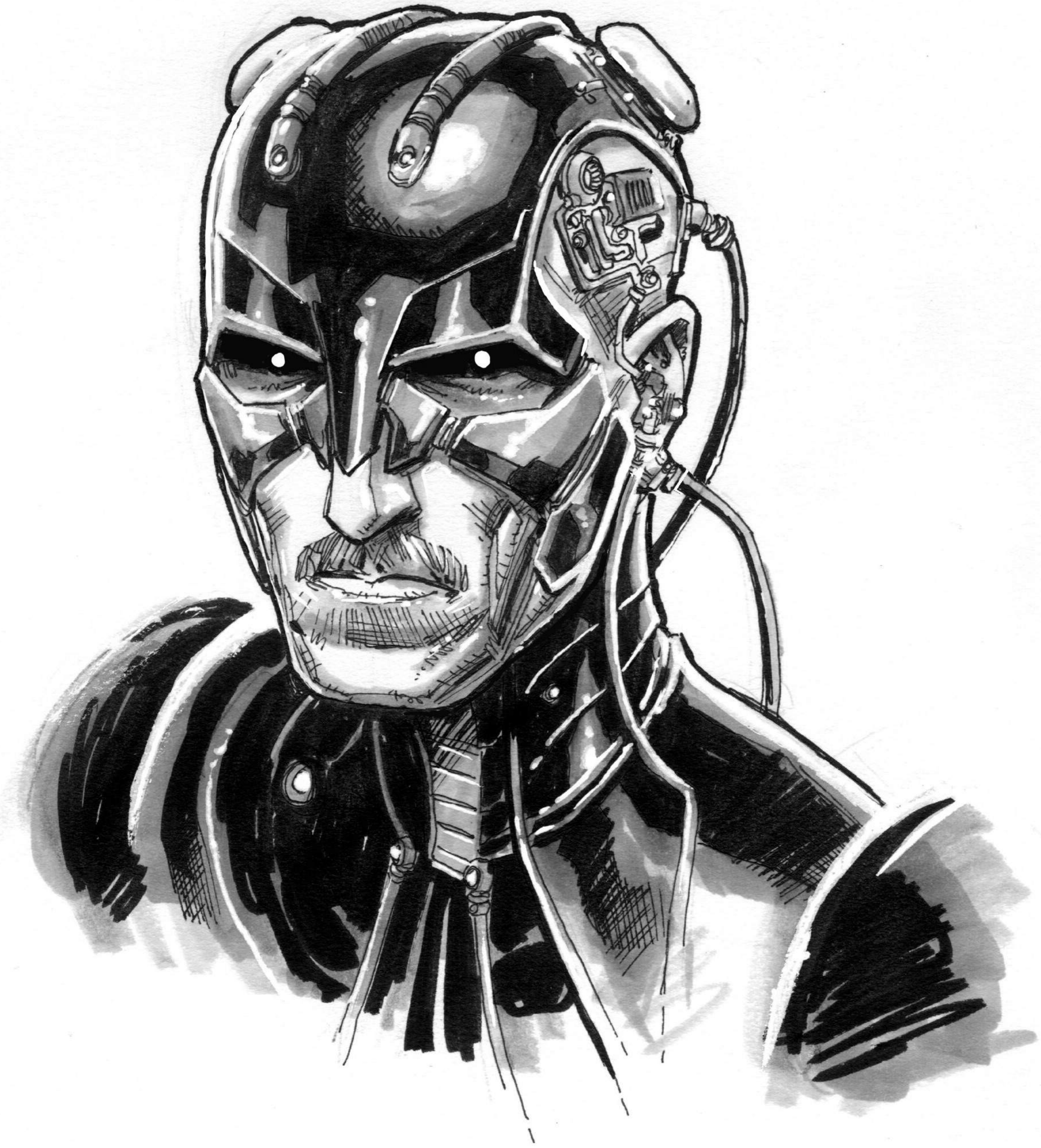
"Beyond being an integral element in the development of the story, Leonid is also a stand-in for us, the reader, as everything plays out. He suggests questions like, who these great men really are, what is their legacy, why did they make the world better and, most importantly, what is required, and who are we, to stand among them."

– Jonathan Hickman

"He is the Eternal Dynamo. He is in tune with cosmic energy. It seems to suggest a limitless potential… But to be honest, I don't know. Ask Hickman, it was his idea."

– Dustin Weaver

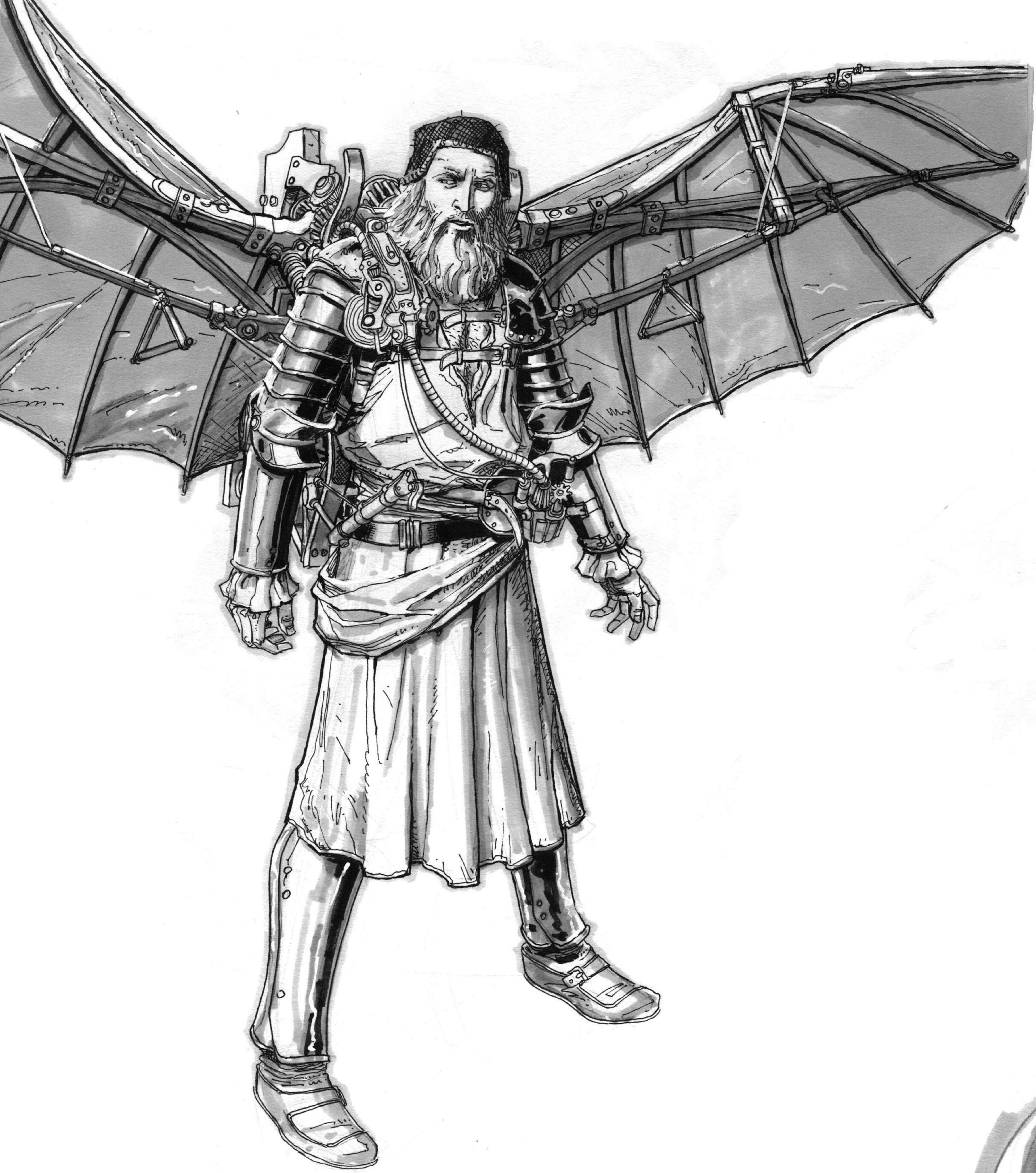




Night Machine

“Well, when you’re designing a character, you’re telling a story. With the Night Machine, I wanted to suggest something electrical, mechanical and mysterious. He looks like someone who is losing his humanity. In this early concept drawing, you can see that his head is hairless and his eyes are cold and inhuman. In the final design, I wanted to give him something a little incongruous with that inhuman look. So he has a mustache. This eccentricity, for me, makes the whole look. It calls into question how inhuman he is.”

– Dustin Weaver



Leonardo da Vinci

"Well, Marvel is a fantastic company to work for, and they certainly deserve a ton of credit for publishing a book like this. I get a pretty big kick out of working on my other books (*Fantastic Four* and *Secret Warriors*), but those come with decades of character and story arcs, and layer after layer of continuity. A book like *S.H.I.E.L.D.* is different. You're not starting off with complex elements. You're building with hydrogen. There's a real feeling of genesis, real Jack and Stan stuff.

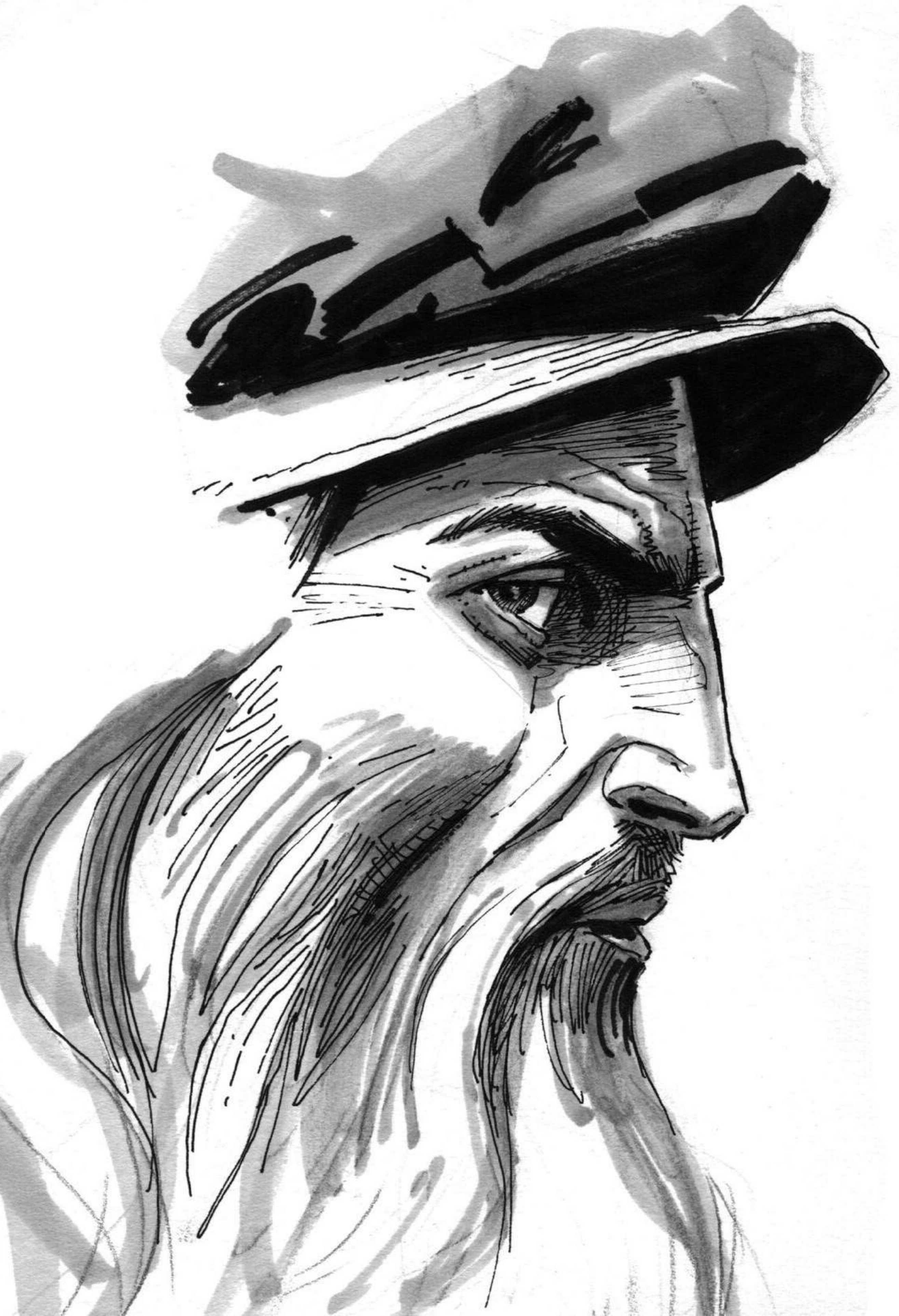
"I'd been kicking around something like this in my head for a while, and when Nick Lowe told me Marvel wanted to do something with the titans of science, things clicked into place for what we feel is a very special book."

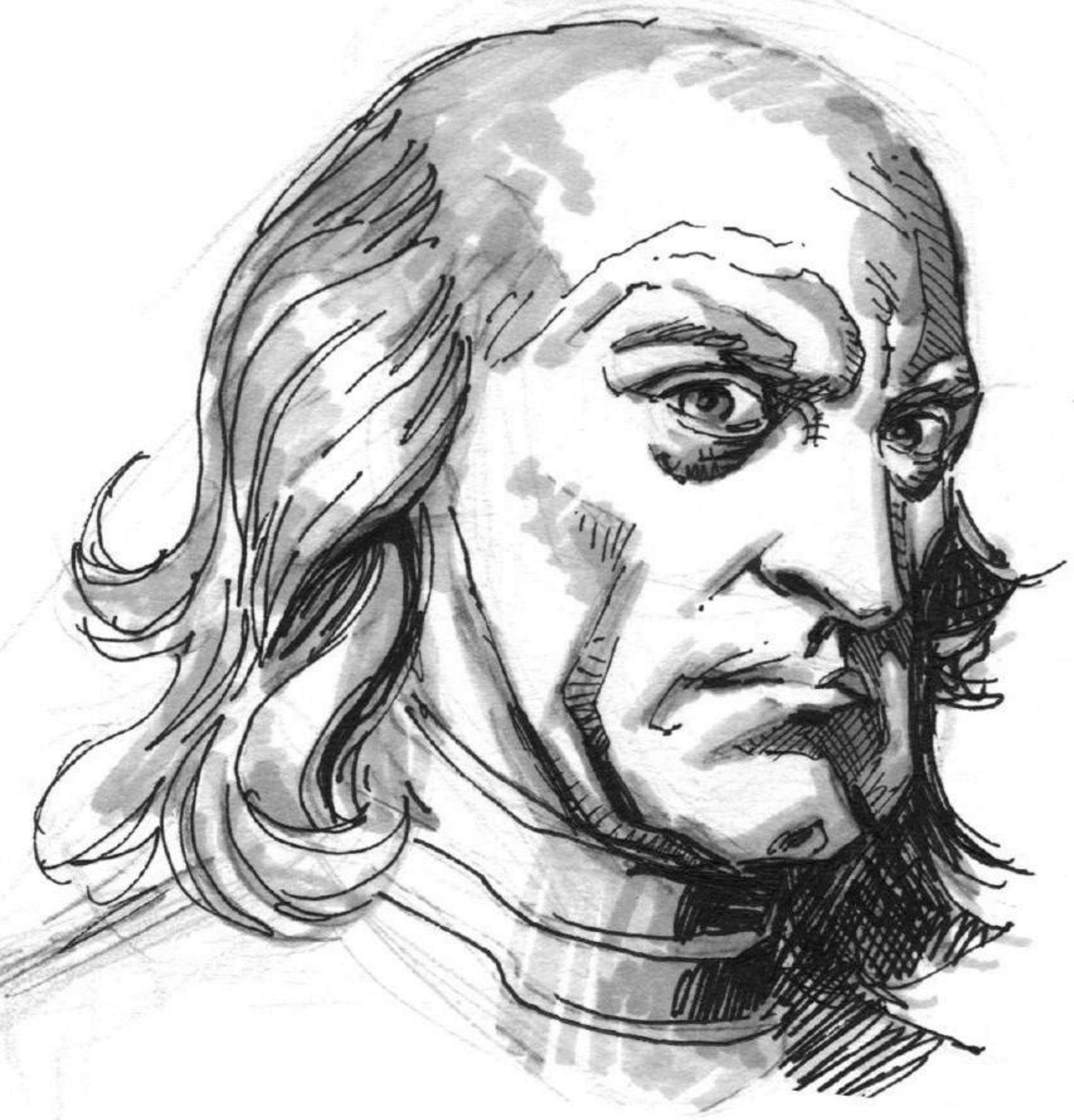
– Jonathan Hickman

"I think the key to making a good comic book hero, one that can fit into the Marvel Universe, is to make him or her larger than life. Da Vinci is actually a natural at being a comic book hero. He IS larger than life, he was considered to be a beautiful man and he is already iconic. Sure, I would have a different take on him if this was a biography about his life, but that's not what this is. It's a Marvel comic. I wanted to focus on his fantastic and legendary qualities. He was the original Reed Richards. He created a robot out of a suit of armor. His flying machine was a direct inspiration for Batman. It's been speculated that the Vitruvian Man was a self-portrait. He was the perfect human proportion.

"Historical realism never gets in the way of making these characters comic book heroes and villains. Our take on these guys is heightened and exaggerated. The things that happen in this book are fantastic and unreal. So using realism becomes a tool for grounding it all. It tells the reader that this is to be taken seriously."

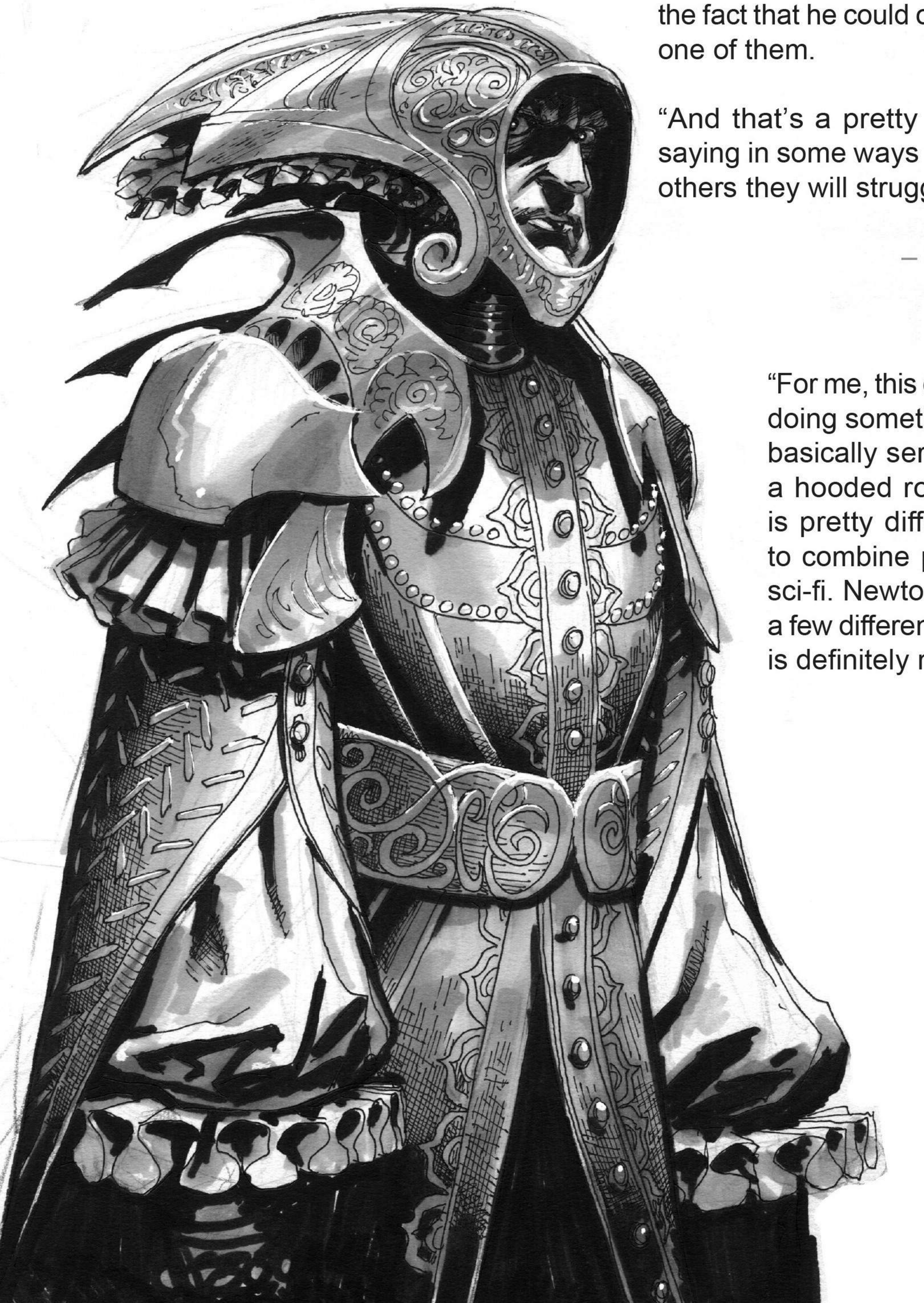
– Dustin Weaver





Newton

"Which is greater, a guy that can literally move a mountain or a guy that changed the world forever because he had an idea? Well, that kind of depends on what impresses you. In addition, I also think you really have to try and maintain a healthy understanding of context as well. I'm sure there are a couple hundred kids on most college campuses around the country that are more culturally sophisticated than Shakespeare was or that know more about psychology or actually have a better understanding of man's relative position in the universe…doesn't change the fact that he could outwrite every damn one of them.



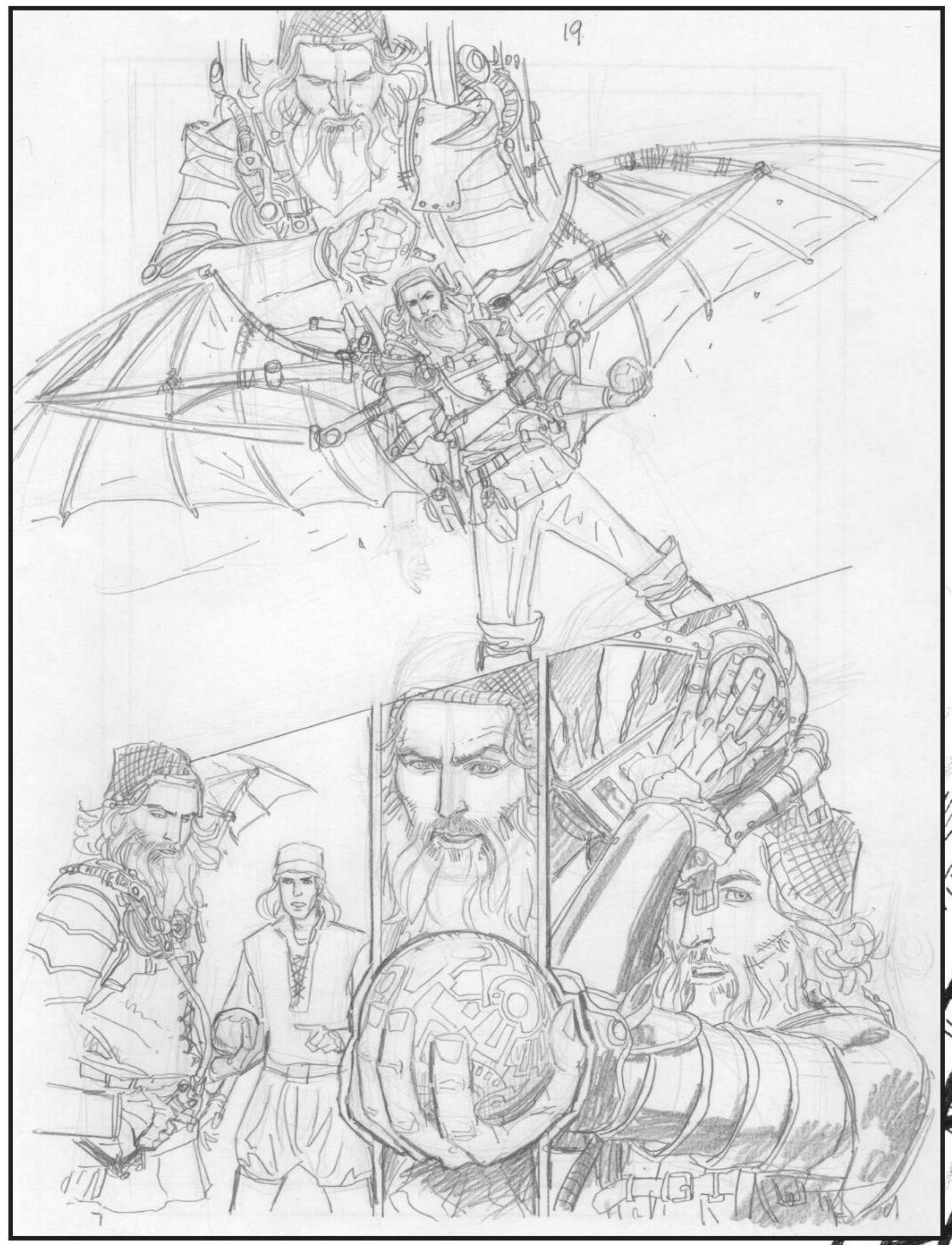
"And that's a pretty drawn out way of saying in some ways they will flourish, in others they will struggle."

– Jonathan Hickman

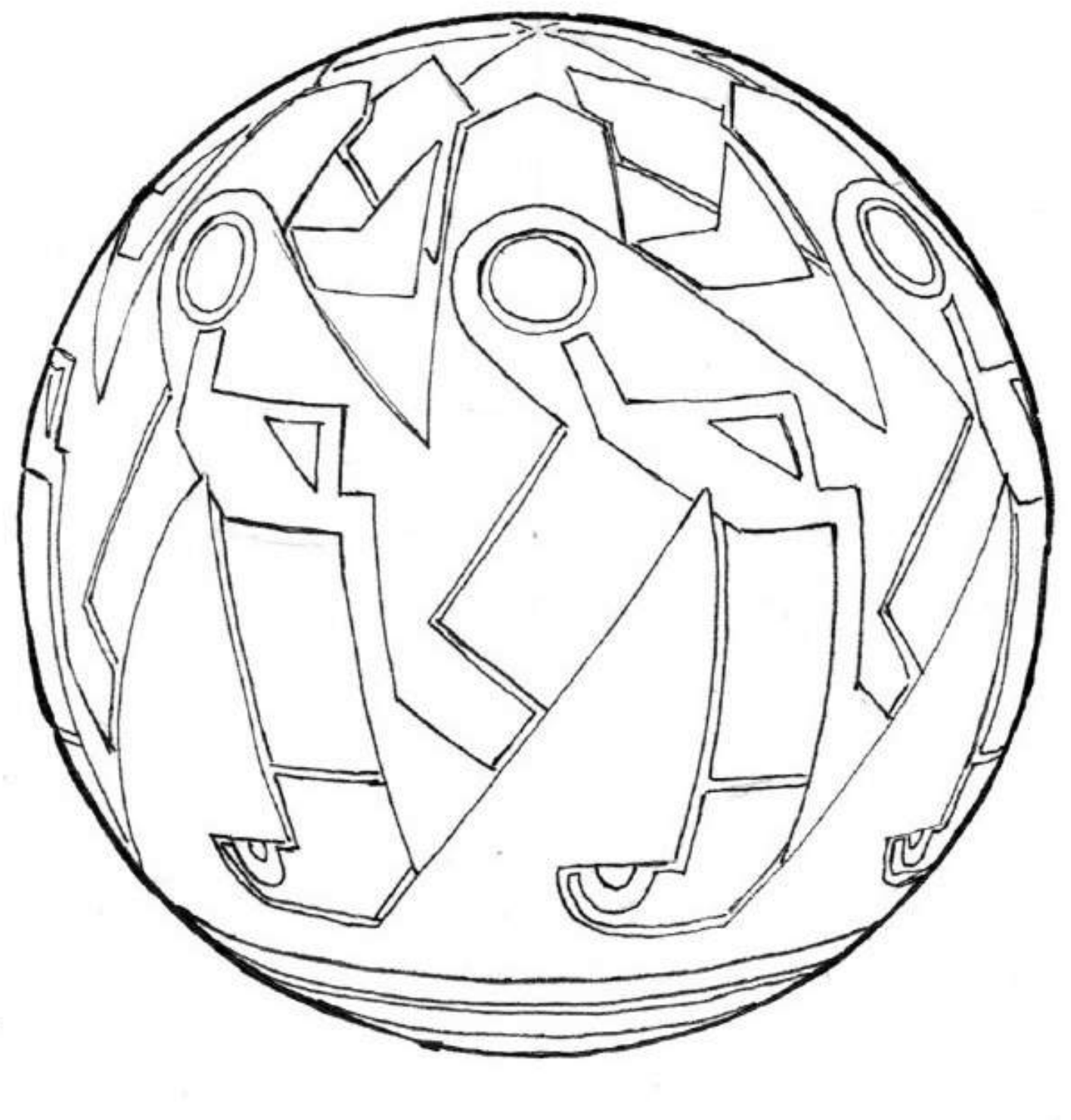
"For me, this design was all about doing something unexpected. It basically serves the purpose of a hooded robe, but the shape is pretty different. I was trying to combine period fashion with sci-fi. Newton will actually have a few different looks, but this one is definitely my favorite."

– Dustin Weaver

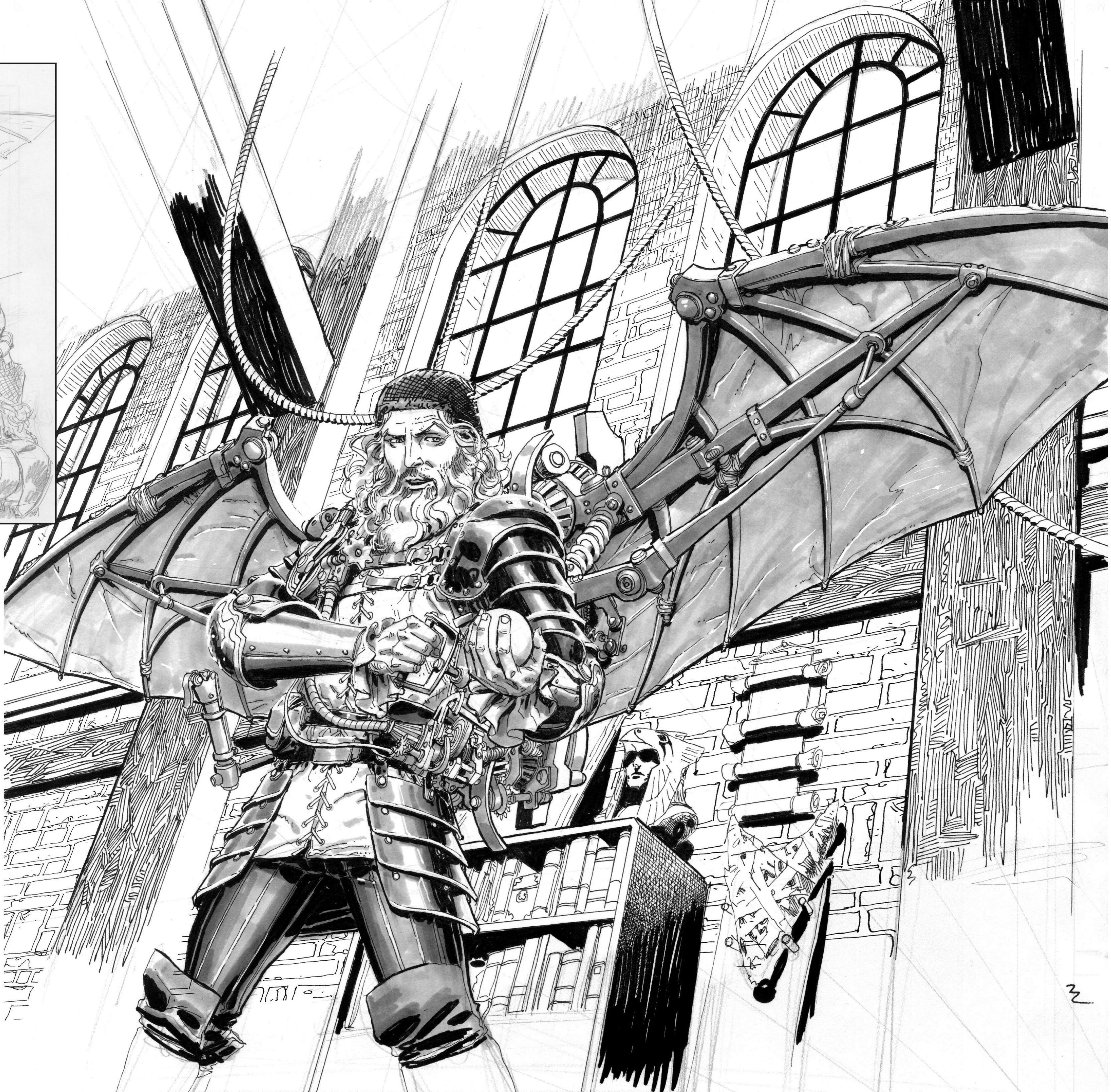
IMMORTAL CITY DESIGN

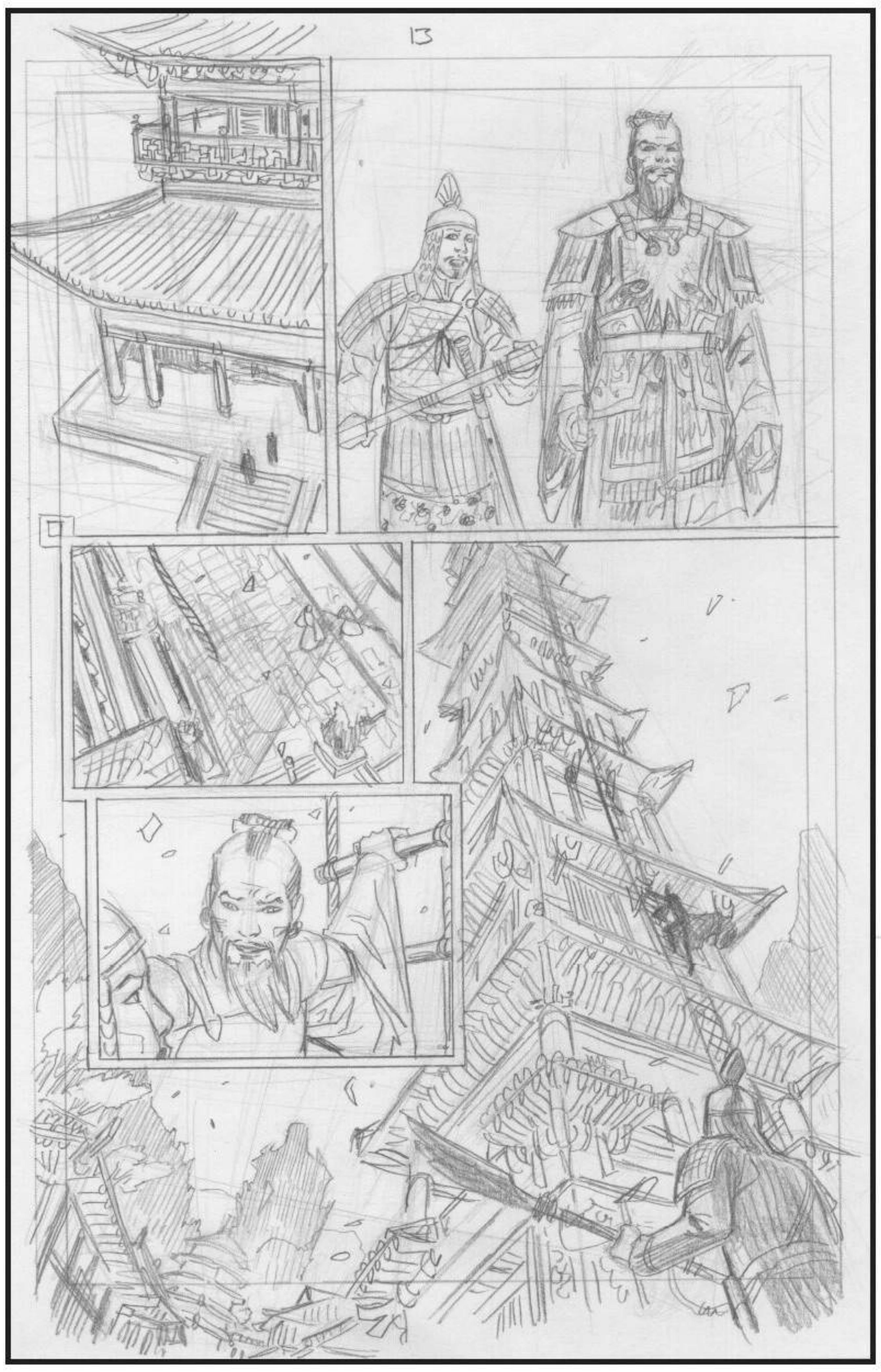


_S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010)_ #1,
page 19 layout
and panel 2 inks

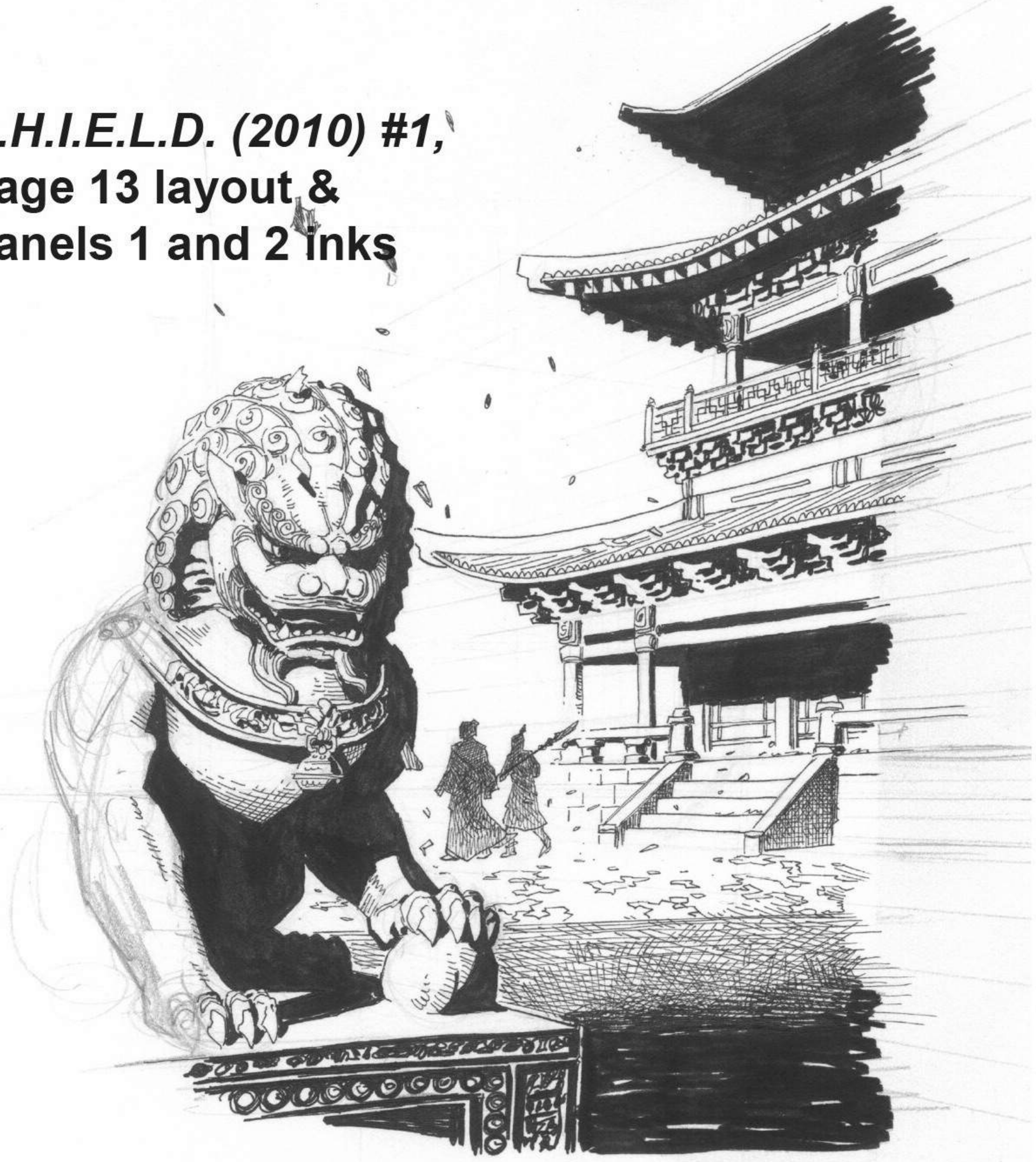


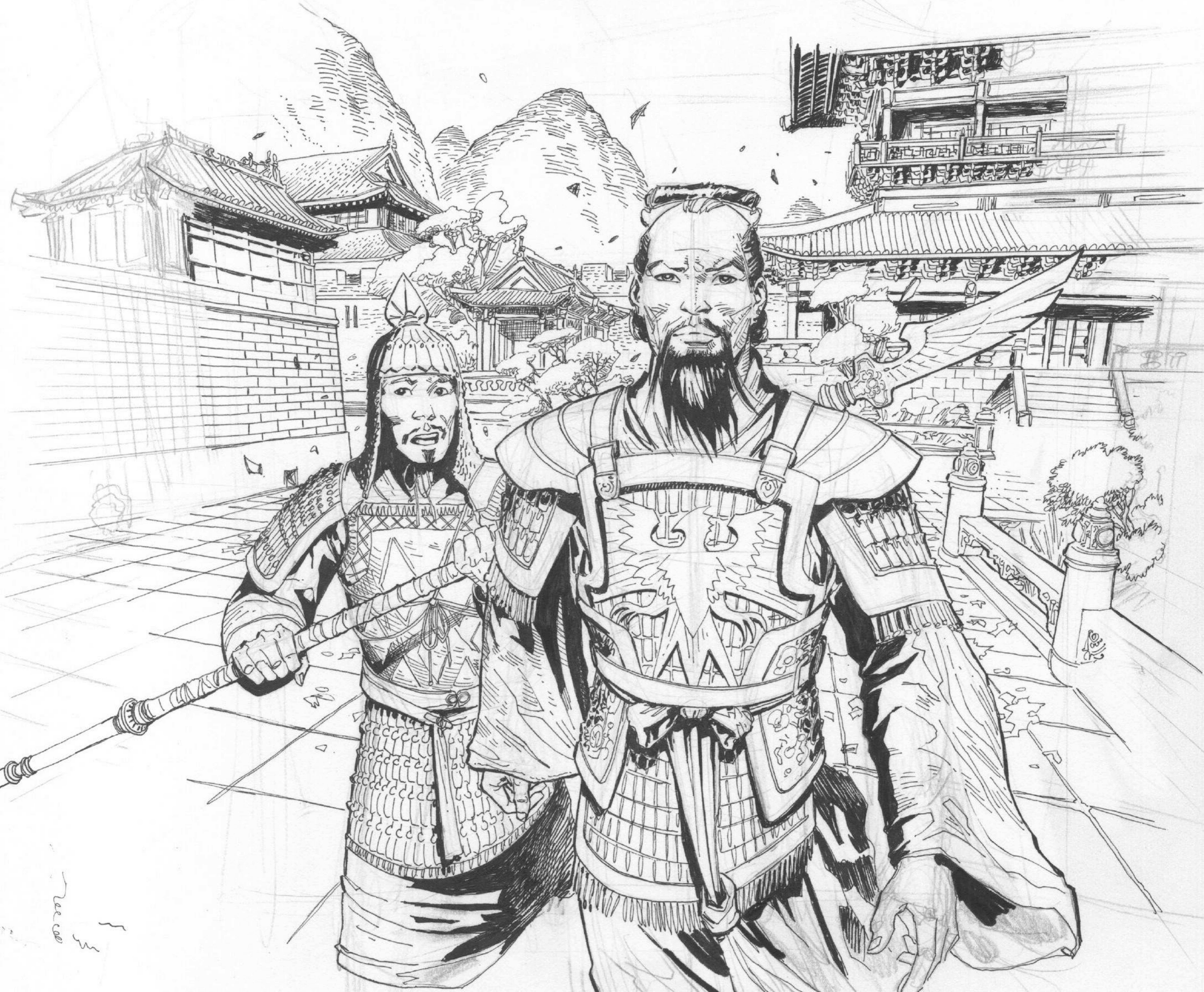
Ball design





S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #1,
page 13 layout &
panels 1 and 2 inks





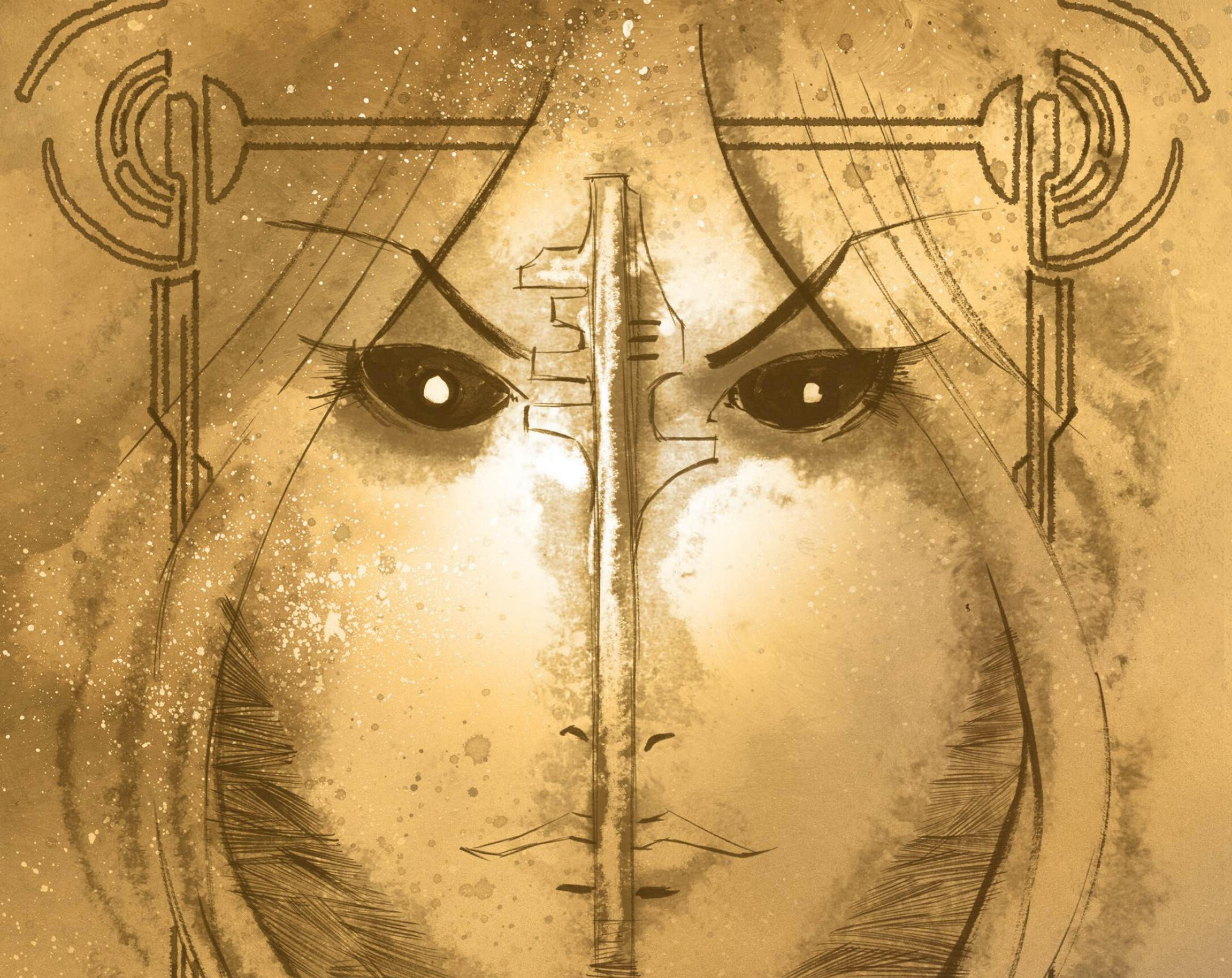
GALILEO'S GIFT

After being named the new master of the Brotherhood of the Shield, Isaac Newton ordered the immediate destruction of Galileo's greatest invention, the perfected Creation Engine. Fitting, as who but God has the right to build their own world?

However, upon gaining access to Galileo's private laboratory, it was discovered that the machine and all plans related to the project had disappeared. While never proven, it was rumored that loyalists to master Galileo had hidden these artifacts for safekeeping.

What can be proven is that in the centuries that followed, the Creation Engine has been used seven times.

Art by Kevin Mellon



THE KEY

Thin Space resonates at a certain frequency. The door, Iter, and its key were constructed of Thin Space.

The door blocks the opening of a wormhole existing in an imaginary plane.

Past the door, through the hole, is your son and the world's only hope.

Guard this key with your life.

Art by Kevin Mellon

MELLON 2011

THE DEATH OF MORDA

The Deviants dragged Morda from her home to the center of Ashomia, all along the way shouting for her bastard. Then they built a great fire and cooked her in a pot.

They ate, and toasted science.

Art by Kevin Mellon

THE FOREVER MAN

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni ascended two years after becoming a man. As time slowly collapsed around him, he was struck by the profound nature of the moment: He would soon cease to exist as a linear creature and would no longer comprehend this feeling of time beginning to flatten.

He achieved illumination as infinity washed over him. Michelangelo was there when man created his first tool, when man made his first art, when he crossed the sea and flew in the air. Michelangelo was there when man landed on the moon, and he was there when the Eternal Dynamo decided the fate of the world.

Michelangelo was there when the world ended.

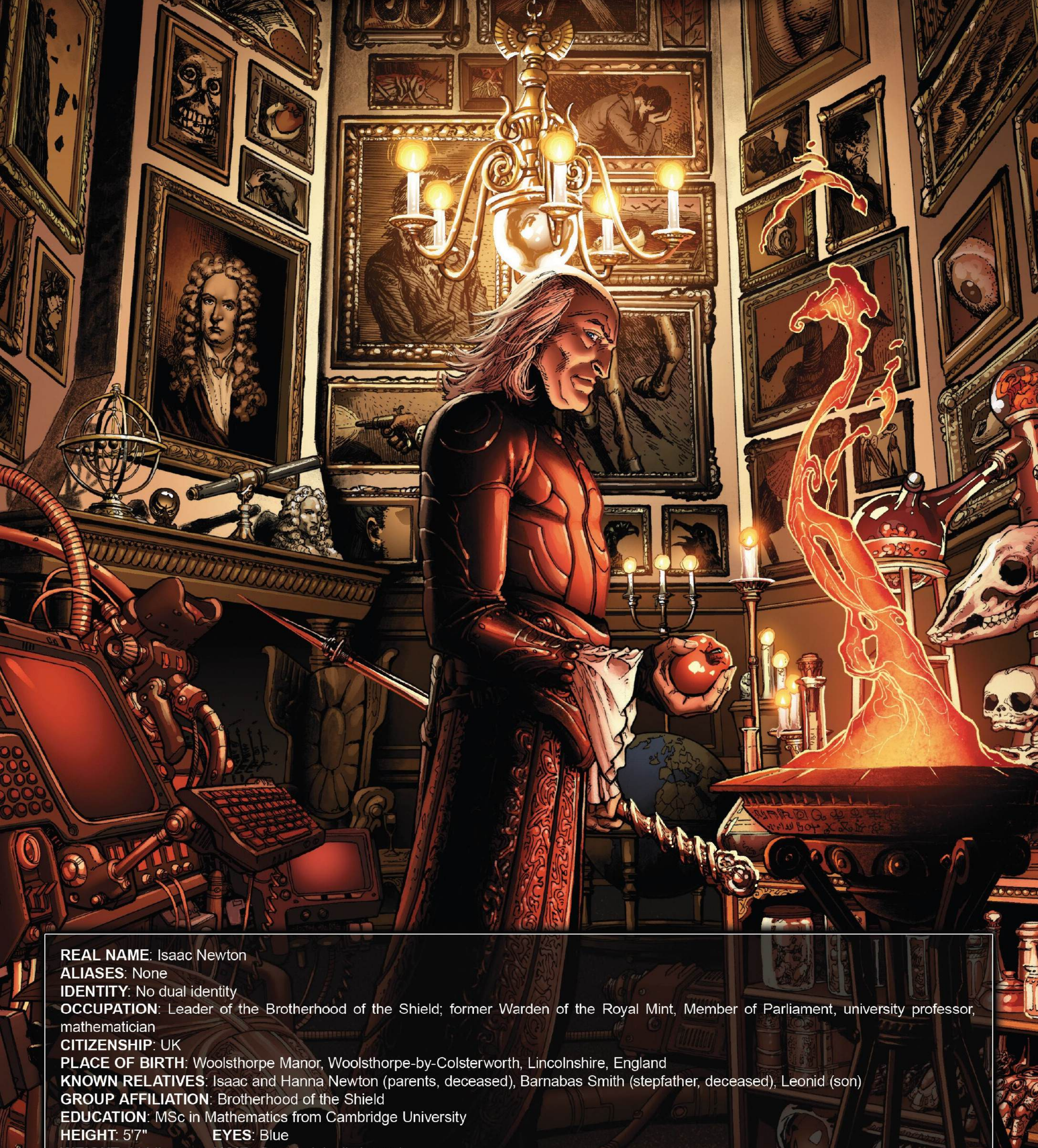
Art by Kevin Mellon

LEONARDO DA VINCI

REAL NAME: Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci
ALIASES: Aries
IDENTITY: No dual identity
OCCUPATION: Engineer, painter, architect, inventor
CITIZENSHIP: Republic of Florence
PLACE OF BIRTH: Vinci, Republic of Florence
KNOWN RELATIVES: Piero Fruosino di Antonio da Vinci (father, deceased), Caterina (mother, deceased), several half-siblings (deceased)
GROUP AFFILIATION: Brotherhood of the Shield
EDUCATION: Apprenticed to Andrea di Cione
HEIGHT: 6'1" **EYES**: Blue
WEIGHT: 178 lbs. **HAIR**: Blond

HISTORY: The illegitimate son of a notary and a peasant woman, Leonardo da Vinci was the archetypal Renaissance Man, equally adept in the arts and the sciences. As an artist, he created some of the most famous paintings in human history, including *The Adoration of the Magi, The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*; as a scientist, he produced treatises on anatomy, cartography and engineering. His genius brought him to the attention of the ancient Brotherhood of the Shield; he eventually became its leader and built its base, the Immortal City, beneath Rome. Noting an anomaly in the Sun, da Vinci constructed a spacesuit capable of surviving the Sun's heat and traveling through time, leaving a mechanical Life-Model Decoy in his stead to continue life as he would have lived it. When da Vinci arrived in the 20th century, da Vinci went to the sun and discovered that the source of the anomaly was an infant Celestial gestating within the star. He returned to Earth, bringing the Celestial with him; he learned the Brotherhood's current leader, Isaac Newton, wished to ensure the end of the world and challenged him for leadership, each seeking the allegiance of Newton's biological son, Leonid. The two factions eventually clashed and the outcome is still unrevealed.

ISAAC NEWTON



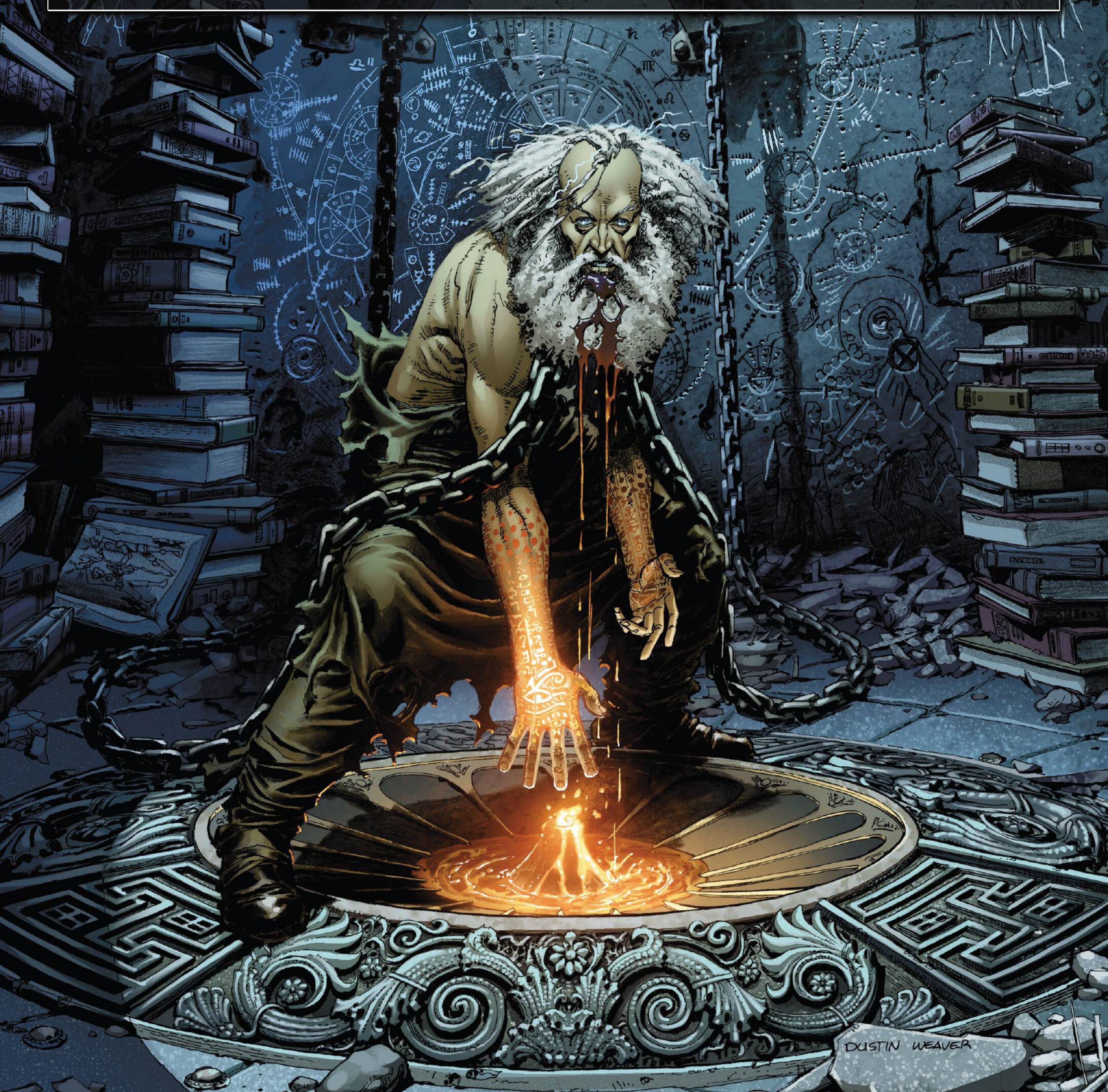
REAL NAME: Isaac Newton
ALIASES: None
IDENTITY: No dual identity
OCCUPATION: Leader of the Brotherhood of the Shield; former Warden of the Royal Mint, Member of Parliament, university professor, mathematician
CITIZENSHIP: UK
PLACE OF BIRTH: Woolsthorpe Manor, Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth, Lincolnshire, England
KNOWN RELATIVES: Isaac and Hanna Newton (parents, deceased), Barnabas Smith (stepfather, deceased), Leonid (son)
GROUP AFFILIATION: Brotherhood of the Shield
EDUCATION: MSc in Mathematics from Cambridge University
HEIGHT: 5'7" **EYES**: Blue
WEIGHT: 144 lbs. **HAIR**: Gray (originally brown)

HISTORY: Born to illiterate farmers, Isaac Newton was a star pupil at school and took a keen interest in mathematics and science. As a young man, Newton was recruited by the ancient Brotherhood of the Shield and schooled in their secrets by Galileo Galilei. Newton sought more knowledge than the Brotherhood could provide, and in 1625 he entered the Deviant city Ashomia, where he was granted access to their secrets by becoming one of their society and mating with a Deviant woman, Morda; once he had learned all he could, he betrayed Morda and the Deviants, destroyed Ashomia and fled. In time, Newton discovered the Elixir of Life, which granted him immortality. He published his magnum opus, the *Principia Mathematica*, in 1687, which outlined universal gravitation and the laws of motion. He also discovered calculus, although another mathematician, Gottfried Leibniz, independently discovered it almost simultaneously; amid accusations of plagiarism, the two became bitter enemies and Newton later took his rival's life. In addition to his scientific pursuits, Newton also wrote extensively on theological matters, although he refrained from publishing those writings that expressed his heretical beliefs. Using the promise of his Elixir, Newton eventually gained total control of the Brotherhood. Unbeknownst to Newton, the son he bore with Morda, Leonid, survived and was eventually inducted into the Brotherhood. In 1956, Leonardo da Vinci, long thought dead, returned to the Brotherhood and challenged Newton's leadership, leading to a violent schism.

NOSTRADAMUS

REAL NAME: Michel de Nostredame
ALIASES: "The Architect of Revelation"
IDENTITY: Publicly known
OCCUPATION: Apothecary, author, translator, astrological consultant
CITIZENSHIP: France
PLACE OF BIRTH: Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France
KNOWN RELATIVES: Jaume and Reynière de Nostredame (parents, deceased), Jean de St. Rémy (maternal great-grandfather), Delphine (sister, deceased), Jean I, Pierre, Hector, Louis, Bertrand, Jean II, Antoine (brothers, all deceased), unidentified wife (deceased), Anne Ponsarde (wife, deceased), three daughters, three sons and two other children (all unidentified and deceased)
GROUP AFFILIATION: None
EDUCATION: Unfinished studies in medicine
HEIGHT: 5'6" **EYES**: Blue
WEIGHT: 125 lbs. **HAIR**: Gray

HISTORY: Born in 1503 to a grain dealer and notary, Michel de Nostredame's childhood remains mostly undocumented until he entered the University of Avignon at age 15. The school was closed shortly after, due to the plague, and Nostredame traveled the countryside and became an apothecary. He married an unidentified woman and had two children who died, presumably of the plague. Years later, Nostredame remarried a rich widow who bore him six children. Moving away from medicine to the occult, he changed his name to the Latinized version Nostradamus and wrote an almanac that contained the first of his prophecies. Persons of nobility and other prominent status began asking him for "psychic" advice, amongst them the immortal Sir Isaac Newton of the Brotherhood of the Shield. When Nostradamus refused to give Newton the prophesies he demanded, Nostradamus was enslaved in an underground chamber beneath the Immortal City and periodically injected with a variation of the Elixir of Life that kept him alive but caused his body and mind to decay. Imprisoned for centuries, Nostradamus persevered until Newton's son Leonid released him in time to witness a violent battle between Newton and a time-traveling Leonardo da Vinci.

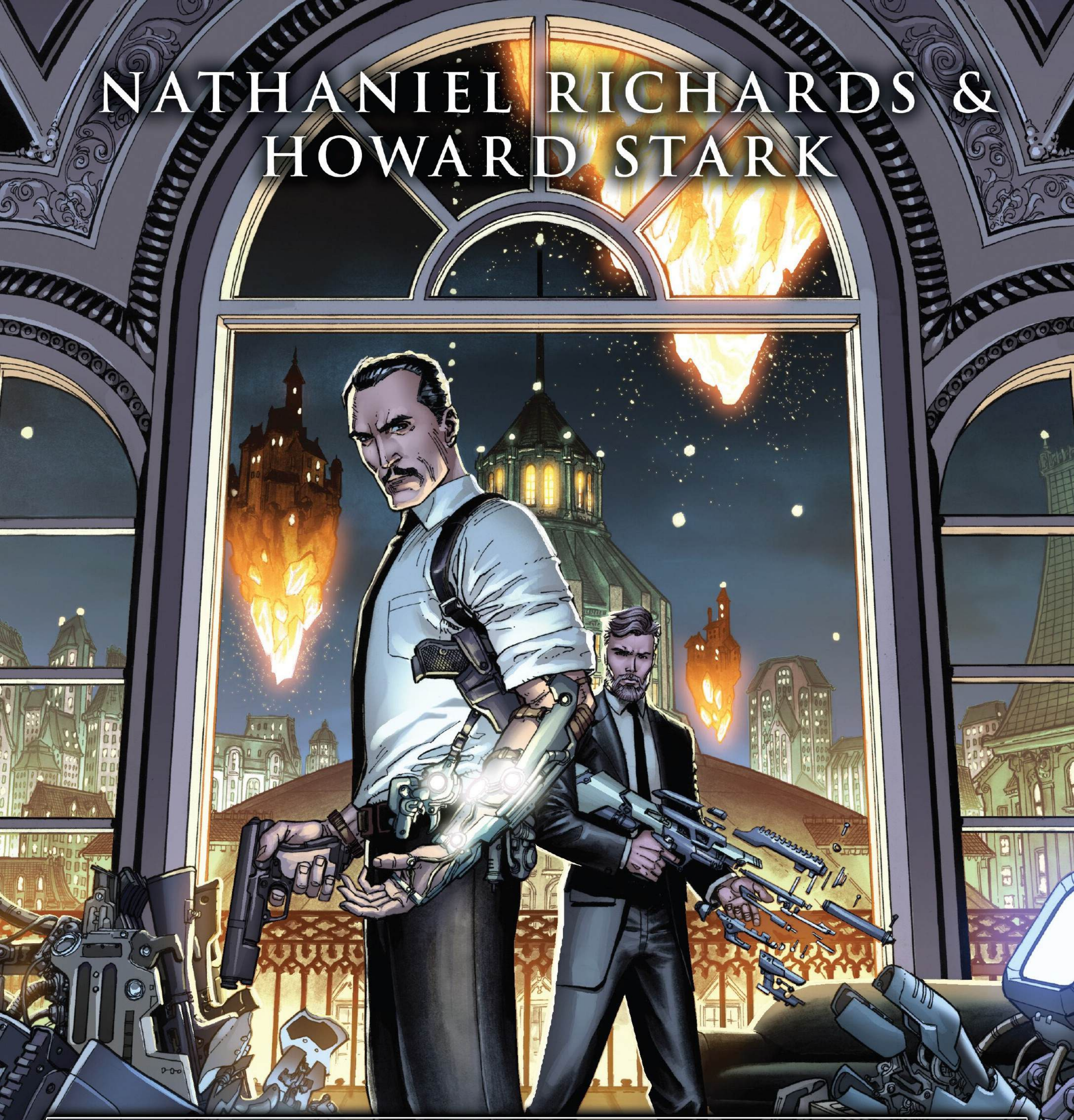


ZHANG HENG

REAL NAME: Zhang Heng
ALIASES: None
IDENTITY: No dual identity
OCCUPATION: Astronomer, administrator, engineer, poet
CITIZENSHIP: China
PLACE OF BIRTH: Luoyang, China
KNOWN RELATIVES: Zhang Kan (grandfather, deceased)
GROUP AFFILIATION: None
EDUCATION: Graduate of Imperial University
HEIGHT: 5'3" **EYES**: Brown
WEIGHT: 153 lbs. **HAIR**: Black

HISTORY: Born in China's Eastern Han Dynasty, circa 78 AD, Zhang Heng studied to be a writer, becoming a noted poet until he turned his attention to astronomy at 30. A skilled inventor, Heng created the first seismograph, capable of detecting earthquakes thousands of miles away; the first odometer, allowing for the production of highly accurate maps; and a water-powered armillary sphere that he used to make the most accurate star maps of his era. His genius brought him to the Emperor An-Ti's attention, soon being appointed the Emperor's chief astronomer. During this time, his astronomical observations assisted in reconfiguring the Chinese calendar, although his uncompromising stances prevented him from rising any further in the court's ranks. In 114 AD, Heng encountered a Celestial, who informed him that she carried an infant Celestial inside her. Told the energy required to birth the child would destroy the planet, Heng instead suggested the Celestial let the infant gestate within the Sun, where it remained in infancy for centuries until discovered by Leonardo da Vinci in 1956. Political intrigues with the court's eunuchs during Emperor Shun's reign eventually prompted him to step down; he later served as administrator of the city of Hejian, although he briefly returned to the Emperor's court before his death in 139 AD.

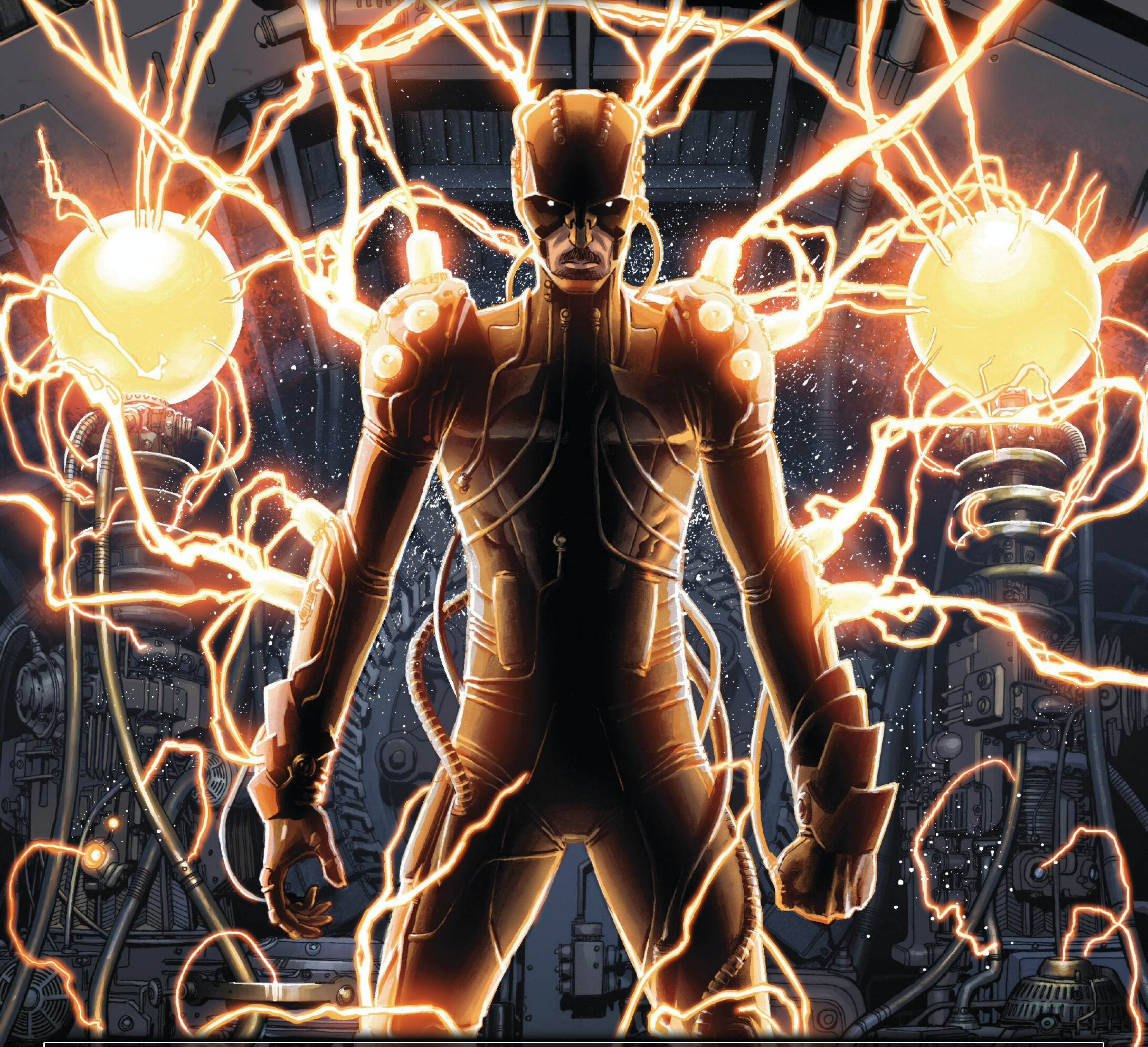
NATHANIEL RICHARDS &
HOWARD STARK



REAL NAME: Nathaniel Richards/Howard Anthony Walter Stark
ALIASES: (Richards) None; (Stark) none
IDENTITY: (Both) No dual identity
OCCUPATION: (Richards) explorer; (Stark) businessman; (both) Brotherhood of the Shield enforcers, scientists
CITIZENSHIP: USA
PLACE OF BIRTH: (Richards) Riverside, California; (Stark) Richford, New York
KNOWN RELATIVES: (Richards) Evelyn Richards (wife, deceased), Reed Richards (Mr. Fantastic, son), others; (Stark) Maria Collins Carbonell Stark (wife, deceased), Anthony Edward "Tony" Stark (Iron Man, son), others
GROUP AFFILIATION: (Both) Brotherhood of the Shield; (Stark) Hellfire Club, Control, Project Tomorrow
EDUCATION: (Richards) extent unknown; vast scientific intellect; (Stark) advanced degrees in physics and mechanical engineering
HEIGHT: (Richards) 6'2"; (Stark) 6'
WEIGHT: (Richards) 180 lbs.; (Stark) 168 lbs.
EYES: (Richards) Brown; (Stark) blue
HAIR: (Richards) Brown; (Stark) black

HISTORY: Partnered together in the early 1950s as Brotherhood of the Shield agents, Nathaniel Richards and Howard Stark were tasked with retrieving Brotherhood leader Isaac Newton's biological son Leonid from Nikola Tesla, who recently resurfaced after disappearing nearly a decade earlier. Tesla attacked them in a suit that could discharge electrical bolts. Richards instinctively fired his weapon, killing Tesla, but the body was taken by a time-traveling Michelangelo and revived by merging him with his suit. Years later, they located Leonid and brought him to the Brotherhood's Immortal City beneath Rome. Stark and Richards were forced into battle again when Tesla broke into the Brotherhood's home. In the battle Tesla's power core was damaged. The resulting explosion coupled with Richards' time-travel abilities and shunted the trio approximately 600,000 years into the future. Stark and Richards repaired Tesla's power core, the three agreed to a truce, and combining their abilities, they re-entered the timestream and returned to their home time.

NIKOLA TESLA



REAL NAME: Nikola Tesla
ALIASES: Night Machine, "Man out of time," "The genius who lit the world"
IDENTITY: (Tesla) publicly known; (Night Machine) secret
OCCUPATION: Electrical engineer, inventor
CITIZENSHIP: Austrian Empire (now Croatia); naturalized citizen of the USA
PLACE OF BIRTH: Smiljan, Austrian Empire
KNOWN RELATIVES: Milutin and Djuka Tesla (parents, deceased), Dane (brother, deceased), Milka, Angelica, Marica (sisters, deceased), Leonid (adopted son)
GROUP AFFILIATION: Honorary member of the National Electric Light Association; fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; formerly Brotherhood of the Shield
EDUCATION: Unfinished studies in mechanical and electrical engineering; honorary doctoral degrees from Columbia and Yale Universities
HEIGHT: 6'2" **EYES**: Brown
WEIGHT: 165 lbs. **HAIR**: Black

HISTORY: Born in the Austrian Empire in 1856, Nikola Tesla became a U.S. citizen in 1891, thereafter contributing many revolutionary developments in modern electricity and electromagnetism. Tesla publicly disagreed with former employer Thomas Edison over the usage of Tesla's alternating current (AC) versus Edison's direct current (DC); ultimately AC was standardized at great professional cost to Tesla. His more eccentric theories and inventions, such as directed-energy weapons, were dismissed by the scientific community and Tesla was labeled a mad scientist by many. Tesla disappeared in 1943, along with notes and technology that were deemed global security risks. Tesla was found and recruited by time-traveling Renaissance genius Michelangelo Buonarroti and tasked with the protection and upbringing of the orphaned son of Sir Isaac Newton. Later tracked down by Shield agents Howard Stark and Nathaniel Richards, Tesla attacked them wearing a suit able to direct electrical bolts; Richards instinctively fired a weapon that cut Tesla in half. Michelangelo spirited Tesla away and revived him by bonding him with his suit. Shortly after, in another confrontation with Stark and Richards, Tesla's power core was damaged and the resultant explosion, coupled with Richards' time-travel abilities, hurtled the trio an estimated 600,000 years into the future. Stark and Richards repaired Tesla's power core, then the three men re-entered the timestream, hoping to control the process enough to return home.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!

Superstar creators **JONATHAN HICKMAN** and **DUSTIN WEAVER** reveal the hidden history of the Marvel Universe — and the legendary figures who shaped the idea that became the espionage organization you know and love!

Collecting *S.H.I.E.L.D. (2010) #1-6* and *#1 Director's Cut*, *S.H.I.E.L.D. (2011) #1-4*, *S.H.I.E.L.D. by Hickman & Weaver #5-6*, and *S.H.I.E.L.D. Infinity* — by Jonathan Hickman, Dustin Weaver, Nick Pitarra, Zachary Baldus, Kevin Mellon, Gabriel Hernandez Walta, Christina Strain, Justin Ponsor, Sonia Oback, Rachelle Rosenberg and Dan Brown.

T+

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